Romances

Alexandre Dumas

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Alexandre Dumas

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THE ROMANCES

OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

VOLUME TWO

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

ILLUSTRATED BY

EDMUND H. GARRETT

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

BOSTON

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THE

COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO.

CHAPTER I.

ITALY: SINBAD THE SAILOR.

Towards the beginning of the year 1838, two young men belonging to the first society of Paris, the Vicomte Albert de Morcerf and the Baron Franz d'Épinay, were at Florence. They had agreed to see the Carnival at Rome that year, and that Franz, who for the last three or four years had inhabited Italy, should act as *cicerone* to Albert. As it is no slight affair to spend the Carnival at Rome, especially when you have no great desire to sleep on the Place du Peuple, or the Campo Vaccino, they wrote to Maître Pastrini, the proprietor of the Hôtel de Londres, Place d'Espagne, to reserve comfortable apartments for them. Maître Pastrini replied that he had only two rooms and a cabinet *al secondo piano*, which he offered at the low charge of a louis *per diem*. They accepted his offer; but wishing to make the best use of the time that was left, Albert started for Naples. As for Franz, he remained at Florence. After having passed several days here, when he had walked in the Eden called the Casines, when he had passed two or three evenings at the houses of the nobles of Florence, he took a fancy into his head after having already visited Corsica, the cradle of Bonaparte, to visit Elba, the halting-place of Napoleon.

One evening he loosened a boat from the iron ring that secured it to the port of Leghorn, laid himself down, wrapped in his cloak, at the bottom, and said to the crew,

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"To the Isle of Elba!" The boat shot out of the harbor like a bird, and the next morning Franz disembarked at Porto Ferrajo. He traversed the island after having followed the traces which the footsteps of the giant have left, and re-embarked for Marciana. Two hours after he landed at Pianosa, where he was assured that red partridges abounded. The sport was bad; Franz succeeded in killing only a few partridges, and like every unsuccessful sportsman, he returned to the boat very much out of temper.

"Ah, if your Excellency chose," said the captain, "you might have capital sport."

"Where?"

"Do you see that island?" continued the captain, pointing to a conical pile that rose from the blue sea.

"Well; what is this island?"

"The island of Monte Cristo."

"But I have no permission to shoot over this island."

"Your Excellency does not require a permission, for the island is uninhabited."

"Ah, indeed!" said the young man. "A desert island in the midst of the Mediterranean must be a curiosity."

"It is very natural; this isle is a mass of rocks, and does not contain an acre of land capable of cultivation."

"To whom does this island belong?"

"To Tuscany."

"What game shall I find there?"

"Thousands of wild goats."

"Who live by licking the stones, I suppose," said Franz, with an incredulous smile.

"No; but by browsing the shrubs and trees that grow out of the crevices of the rocks."

"Where can I sleep?"

"On shore, in the grottos, or on board in your cloak; besides, if your Excellency pleases, we can leave as soon

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as the chase is finished. We can sail as well by night as by day, and if the wind drops we can use our oars."

As Franz had sufficient time before rejoining his companion, and had no further occasion to trouble himself about his apartment in Rome, he accepted the proposition. Upon his answer in the affirmative, the sailors exchanged a few words together in a low tone. "Well," he asked; "what? is there any difficulty to be surmounted?"

"No," replied the captain, "but we must warn your Excellency that the island is contumacious."

"What do you mean?"

"That Monte Cristo, although uninhabited, yet serves occasionally as a refuge for the smugglers and pirates who come from Corsica, Sardinia, and Africa; and that if anything betrays that we have been there, we shall have to perform quarantine for six days on our return to Leghorn."

"The devil! that is quite another thing! Six days! just the time which God required to create the world. It is somewhat long, my children."

"But who will say that your Excellency has been to Monte Cristo?"

"Oh, I shall not," cried Franz.

"Nor I! nor I!" chorused the sailors.

"Then steer for Monte Cristo."

The captain gave his orders; the bow was turned towards the island; and the boat was soon sailing in that direction. Franz waited until all was finished; and when the sail was filled and the four sailors had taken their places, three forward and one at the helm, he resumed the conversation. "Gaetano," said he to the captain, "you tell me Monte Cristo serves as a refuge for pirates, who are, it seems to me, a very different kind of game from the goats."

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"Yes, your Excellency; and it is true."

"I knew there were smugglers; but I thought that since the capture of Algiers and the destruction of the regency, pirates existed only in the romances of Cooper and Captain Marryat."

"Your Excellency is mistaken; there are pirates, just as there are bandits, — who were believed to have been exterminated by Pope Leo XII., and who yet every day rob travellers at the gates of Rome. Has not your Excellency heard that the French *chargé d'affaires* was robbed six months ago within five hundred paces of Velletri?"

"Oh, yes, I heard that."

"Well, then, if like us your Excellency lived at Leghorn, you would hear from time to time that a little merchant vessel, or an English yacht that was expected at Bastia, at Porto Ferrajo, or at Civita Vecchia, has not arrived; that no one knows what has become of it, and that doubtless it has struck on a rock and foundered. Now, this rock it has met is a long and narrow boat manned by six or eight men, who have surprised and plundered it some dark and stormy night near some desert and gloomy isle, as bandits plunder a carriage at the corner of a wood."

"But," asked Franz, who lay wrapped in his cloak at the bottom of the bark, "why do not those who have been plundered complain to the French, Sardinian, or Tuscan governments?"

"Why?" said Gaetano, with a smile.

"Yes, why?"

"Because in the first place they transfer from the vessel to their own boat whatever they think worth taking, then they bind the crew hand and foot; they attach to every one's neck a four and twenty pound ball; a large hole is pierced in the vessel's bottom, and then they leave her.

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At the end of ten minutes the vessel begins to roll, labor, and then sink; then one of the sides plunges and then the other. It rises and sinks again; suddenly a noise like the report of a cannon is heard, — it is the air breaking the deck. Soon the water rushes out of the scupperholes like a whale spouting; the vessel gives a last groan, spins round and round and disappears, forming a vast whirlpool in the ocean, and then all is over. So that in five minutes nothing but the eye of God can see the vessel where she lies at the bottom of the sea. Do you understand now," said the captain, laughing, "why no complaints are made to the Government, and why the vessel does not arrive at the port?"

It is probable that if Gaetano had related this previously to proposing the expedition, Franz would have hesitated ere he accepted it; but now that they had started, he thought it would be cowardly to draw back. He was one of those men who do not rashly court danger, but if danger presents itself, encounter it with imperturbable coolness. He was one of those calm and resolute men who look upon a danger as an adversary in a duel; who calculate its movements and study its attacks; who retreat sufficiently to take breath, but not to appear cowardly; who, understanding all their advantages, kill at a single blow. "Bah!" said he, "I have travelled through Sicily and Calabria, I have sailed two months in the Archipelago; and yet I never saw even the shadow of a bandit or a pirate."

"I did not tell your Excellency this to deter you from your project," replied Gaetano; "but you questioned me, and I have answered, — that 's all."

"Yes, my dear Gaetano, and your conversation is most interesting; and as I wish to enjoy it as long as possible, steer for Monte Cristo."

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The wind blew strongly; the boat sailed six or seven knots an hour; and they were rapidly nearing the end of their voyage. As they approached, the island seemed to rise a huge mass from the bosom of the sea; and through the clear atmosphere in the light of closing day, they could distinguish the rocks heaped on one another like bullets in an arsenal, in whose crevices they could see the green bushes and trees that were growing. As for the sailors, although they appeared perfectly tranquil, yet it was evident that they were on the alert, and that they very carefully watched the glassy surface over which they were sailing, and on which a few fishing-boats with their white sails were alone visible. They were within fifteen miles of Monte Cristo when the sun began to set behind Corsica, whose mountains appeared against the sky, and showing their rugged peaks in bold relief; this mass of stones, like the giant Adamastor, rose threateningly before the boat, from which it hid the sun that gilded its higher peaks. By degrees the shadow rose from the sea and seemed to drive before it the last rays of the expiring day. At last the reflection rested on the summit of the mountain, where it paused an instant, like the fiery crest of a volcano; then the shadow gradually covered the summit as it had covered the base, and the island now appeared to be a gray mountain that grew continually darker. Half an hour later, and the night was quite dark.

Fortunately the mariners were used to these latitudes and knew every rock in the Tuscan archipelago, for in the midst of this obscurity Franz was not without uneasiness. Corsica had long since disappeared, and Monte Cristo itself was invisible; but the sailors seemed, like the lynx, to see in the dark, and the pilot who steered did not evince the slightest hesitation. An hour had passed since the sun had set, when Franz fancied he saw,

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at a quarter of a mile to the left, a dark mass; but it was impossible to make out what it was, and fearing to excite the mirth of the sailors by mistaking a floating cloud for land, he remained silent. Suddenly a great light appeared on the strand; land might resemble a cloud, but the fire was not a meteor. "What is this light?" he asked.

"Silence!" said the captain; "it is a fire."

"But you told me the island was uninhabited!"

"I said there were no fixed habitations on it; but I said also that it served sometimes as a harbor for smugglers."

"And for pirates?"

"And for pirates," returned Gaetano, repeating Franz's words. "It is for that reason I have given orders to pass the isle, for, as you see, the fire is behind us."

"But this fire," continued Franz, "seems to me a thing that should rather assure than alarm us; men who did not wish to be seen would not light a fire."

"Oh, that goes for nothing," said Gaetano. "If you can guess the position of the island in the darkness, you will see that the fire cannot be seen from the side, or from Pianoso, but only from the sea."

"You think, then, that this fire announces unwelcome neighbors?"

"That is what we must ascertain," returned Gaetano, fixing his eyes on this terrestrial star.

"How can you ascertain?"

"You shall see."

Gaetano consulted with his companions; and after five minutes' discussion a manœuvre was executed which caused the boat to tack about. They returned in the direction from which they had come, and in a few minutes the fire disappeared, hidden by a rise in the land. The pilot again changed the course of the little vessel, which rapidly ap-

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proached the island, and was soon within fifty paces of it. Gaetano lowered the sail, and the boat remained stationary. All this was done in silence, and since their course had been changed not a word was spoken.

Gaetano, who had proposed the expedition, had taken all the responsibility on himself; the four sailors fixed their eyes on him, while they prepared their oars and held themselves in readiness to row away, which, thanks to the darkness, would not be difficult. As for Franz, he examined his arms with the utmost coolness. He had two double-barrelled guns and a rifle; he loaded them, looked at the locks, and waited quietly. During this time the captain had thrown off his vest and shirt, and secured his trousers round his waist; his feet were naked, so he had no shoes and stockings to take off. After these preparations he placed his finger on his lips, and lowering himself noiselessly into the sea, swam towards the shore with such precaution that it was impossible to hear the slightest sound; he could be traced only by the phosphorescent line in his wake. This track soon disappeared; it was evident that he had touched the shore. Every one on board remained motionless during half an hour, when the same luminous track was again observed, and in two strokes he had regained the boat.

"Well?" exclaimed Franz and the sailors all together.

"They are Spanish smugglers," said he; "they have with them two Corsican bandits."

"And what are these Corsican bandits doing here with Spanish smugglers?"

"Alas!" returned the captain, with an accent of profound Christian charity, "we ought always to help one another. Very often the bandits are hard pressed by gendarmes or carbineers; well, they see a boat, and good fellows like us on board. They come and demand

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hospitality of us. How can you refuse help to a poor hunted devil? We receive them, and for greater security we stand out to sea. This costs us nothing, and saves the life, or at least the liberty, of a fellow-creature, who on the first occasion returns the service by pointing out some safe spot where we can land our goods without interruption."

"Ah!" said Franz, "then you are a smuggler occasionally, Gaetano?"

"Your Excellency, one does a little of everything; we must live somehow," returned the other, smiling in a way impossible to describe.

"Then you know the men who are now on Monte Cristo?"

"Oh, yes, we sailors are like freemasons, and recognize each other by certain signs."

"And do you think we have nothing to fear if we land?"

"Nothing at all! smugglers are not thieves."

"But these two Corsican bandits?" said Franz, calculating the chances of peril.

"Eh!" said Gaetano, "it is not their fault that they are bandits; it is that of the authorities."

"How so?"

"Because they are pursued for having made a *peau*, as if it was not in a Corsican's nature to revenge himself."

"What do you mean by having made a *peau*, — having assassinated a man?" said Franz, continuing his investigation.

"I mean that they have killed an enemy, which is a very different thing," returned the captain.

"Well," said the young man, "let us demand hospitality of these smugglers and bandits. Do you think they will grant it?"

"Without doubt."

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"How many are they?"

"Four, and the two bandits make six."

"Just our number, so that if they prove troublesome we shall be able to check them; so for the last time steer to Monte Cristo."

"Yes; but your Excellency will permit us to take some precautions."

"By all means; be as wise as Nestor and as prudent as Ulysses. I do more than permit, I exhort you."

"Silence, then!" said Gaetano.

Every one obeyed. For a man who, like Franz, viewed his position in its true light, it was a grave one. He was alone in the darkness with sailors whom he did not know and who had no reason to be devoted to him; who knew that he had in his belt several thousand livres; and who had often examined his arms, which were very beautiful, if not with envy, at least with curiosity. On the other hand, he was about to land without any other escort than these men, on an island which bore a very religious name, but which did not seem to offer Franz any other hospitality than that of Calvary to Christ, thanks to the smugglers and bandits. The history of the scuttled vessels, which had appeared improbable during the day, seemed very probable at night. Placed as he was between two imaginary dangers, he did not quit the crew with his eyes, or his gun with his hand.

However, the sailors had again hoisted the sail, and the vessel was once more cleaving the waves. Through the darkness Franz, whose eyes were now more accustomed to it, distinguished the granite giant by which the boat was sailing; and then, turning an angle of the rock, he saw the fire more brilliant than ever, round which five or six persons were seated. The blaze illumined the sea for a hundred paces round. Gaetano skirted the light, carefully

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keeping the boat out of its rays; then, when they were opposite the fire, he entered into the centre of the circle, singing a fishing-song, of which his companions sang the chorus. At the first words of the song, the men seated round the fire rose and approached the landing-place, their eyes fixed on the boat, of which they evidently sought to judge the force and divine the intention. They soon appeared satisfied and returned (with the exception of one, who remained at the shore) to their fire, at which a whole goat was roasting. When the boat was within twenty paces of the shore, the man on the beach made with his carbine the movement of a sentinel who sees a patrol, and cried, "Who goes there?" in Sardinian. Franz coolly cocked both barrels. Gaetano then exchanged a few words with this man, which the traveller did not understand, but which evidently concerned him.

"Will your Excellency give your name, or remain *incognito?*" asked the captain.

"My name must rest unknown; merely say I am a Frenchman travelling for pleasure."

As soon as Gaetano had transmitted this answer, the sentinel gave an order to one of the men seated round the fire, who rose and disappeared among the rocks. Not a word was spoken; every one seemed occupied, — Franz with his disembarkment, the sailors with their sails, the smugglers with their goat, — but in the midst of all this carelessness it was evident that they mutually observed each other. The man who had disappeared returned suddenly on the opposite side to that by which he had left; he made a sign with his head to the sentinel, who, turning to the boat uttered these words, "*S'accommodi.*" The Italian *s'accommodi* is untranslatable; it means at once: "Come; enter; you are welcome; make yourself at home; you are the master." It is like that Turkish

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phrase of Molière's that so astonished *le bourgeois gentilhomme* by the number of things it contained. The sailors did not wait for a second invitation; four strokes of the oar brought them to the land. Gaetano sprang to shore, exchanged a few words with the sentinel; then his comrades disembarked, and lastly came Franz's turn. One of his guns was swung over his shoulder, Gaetano had the other, and a sailor held his rifle; his dress, half artist, half dandy, excited no suspicion, and consequently no disquietude. The boat was moored to the shore, and they advanced a few paces to find a comfortable bivouac; but doubtless the spot they chose did not suit the smuggler who filled the post of sentinel, for he cried out, "Not that way, if you please."

Gaetano faltered an excuse, and advanced to the opposite side, while two sailors kindled torches at the fire to light them on their way. They advanced about thirty paces, and then stopped at a small esplanade surrounded with rocks, in which seats had been cut, not unlike sentry-boxes. Around in the crevices of the rocks grew a few dwarf oaks and thick bushes of myrtles. Franz lowered a torch and saw by the light of a mass of cinders that he was not the first to discover this retreat, which was doubtless one of the halting-places of the wandering visitors of Monte Cristo. As for his anticipation of events, once on *terra firma*, once that he had seen the indifferent if not friendly appearance of his hosts, his preoccupation had disappeared, or rather at sight of the goat had turned to appetite. He mentioned this to Gaetano, who replied that nothing could be more easy than to prepare a supper, since they had in their boat bread, wine, half a dozen partridges, and a good fire to roast them by. "Besides," added he, "if the smell of their roast meat tempts you, I will go and offer them two of our birds for a slice."

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"You seem born for negotiation," returned Franz; "go and try."

During this time the sailors had collected dried sticks and branches, with which they made a fire. Franz waited impatiently, smelling the odor of the goat, when the captain returned with a mysterious air.

"Well," inquired Franz, "anything new? Do they refuse?"

"On the contrary," returned Gaetano, "the chief, who was told you were a young Frenchman, invites you to sup with him."

"Well," observed Franz, "this chief is very polite; and I see no objection, — especially as I bring my share of the supper."

"Oh, it is not that, — he has plenty and to spare for supper; but he attaches a singular condition to your presentation at his house."

"His house! has he built one here, then?'

"No, but he has a very comfortable one all the same, so they say."

"You know this chief, then?"

"I have heard him spoken of."

"Ill or well?"

"Both."

"The devil! and what is this condition?"

"That you are blindfolded, and do not take off the bandage until he himself bids you." Franz looked at Gaetano, to see, if possible, what he thought of this proposal. "Ah," replied he, guessing Franz's thought, "I know this merits reflection."

"What should you do in my place?"

"I, who have nothing to lose, — I should go."

"You would accept?"

"Yes, were it only out of curiosity."

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"There is something very curious about this chief, then?"

"Listen," said Gaetano, lowering his voice; "I do not know if what they say is true—" He stopped to see if any one was near.

"What do they say?"

"That this chief inhabits a cavern to which the Pitti Palace is nothing."

"What nonsense!" said Franz, reseating himself.

"It is no nonsense; it is quite true. Cama, the pilot of the 'St. Ferdinand,' went in once, and he came back amazed, vowing that such treasures were only to be heard of in fairy tales."

"Do you know," observed Franz, "that with such stories you would make me enter the enchanted cavern of Ali Baba?"

"I tell you what I have been told."

"Then you advise me to accept?"

"Oh, I don't say that; your Excellency will do as you please. I should be sorry to advise you in the matter."

Franz reflected a few moments, felt that a man so rich could not have any intention of plundering him of what little he had; and seeing only the prospect of a good supper, he accepted. Gaetano departed with the reply. Franz was prudent, and wished to learn all he possibly could concerning his host. He turned towards the sailor who during this dialogue had sat gravely plucking the partridges with the air of a man proud of his office, and asked him how these men had landed, as no vessel of any kind was visible.

"Never mind that," returned the sailor; "I know their vessel."

"Is it a very beautiful vessel?"

"I would not wish for a better to sail round the world."

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"Of what burden is she?"

"About a hundred tons; but she is built to stand any weather. She is what the English call a yacht."

"Where was she built?"

"I do not know; but my own opinion is she is a Genoese."

"And how did a leader of smugglers," continued Franz, "venture to build a vessel designed for such a purpose at Genoa?"

"I did not say that the owner was a smuggler," replied the sailor.

"No; but Gaetano did, I thought."

"Gaetano had only seen the vessel from a distance; he had not then spoken to any one."

"And if this person be not a smuggler, who is he?"

"A wealthy signor, who travels for his pleasure."

"Come," thought Franz, "he is still more mysterious, since the two accounts do not agree. What is his name?"

"If you ask him he says Sinbad the Sailor; but I doubt its being his real name."

"Sinbad the Sailor?"

"Yes."

"And where does he reside?"

"On the sea."

"What country does he come from?"

"I do not know."

"Have you ever seen him?"

"Sometimes."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"Your Excellency will judge for yourself."

"Where will he receive me?"

"No doubt in the subterranean palace Gaetano told you of."

"Have you never had the curiosity, when you have

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landed and found this island deserted, to seek for this enchanted palace?"

"Oh, yes, more than once, but always in vain; we examined the grotto all over, but we never could find the slightest trace of any opening. They say that the door is not opened by a key, but by a magic word."

"Decidedly," muttered Franz, "this is an adventure of the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"His Excellency waits for you," said a voice which Franz recognized as that of the sentinel. He was accompanied by two of the yacht's crew. Franz drew his handkerchief from his pocket and presented it to the man who had spoken to him. Without uttering a word they bandaged his eyes with a care that showed their apprehension of his committing some indiscretion. Afterwards he was made to promise that he would not make any attempt to raise the bandage. Then his two guides took his arms, and he advanced, guided by them and preceded by the sentinel. After advancing about thirty paces he perceived the appetizing odor of the kid that was roasting, and knew thus that he was passing the bivouac; they then led him on about fifty paces farther, evidently advancing in the direction forbidden to Gaetano, — a prohibition which he could now comprehend. Presently, by a change in the atmosphere he perceived that they were entering a cave; after going on for a few seconds more he heard a crackling, and it seemed to him as though the atmosphere again changed, and became balmy and perfumed. At length his feet touched on a thick and soft carpet, and his guides let go their hold of him.

There was a moment's silence, and then a voice, in excellent French, although with a foreign accent, said, "Welcome, Monsieur! I beg you will remove your bandage." As may be easily imagined, Franz did not wait

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for a repetition of this permission, but took off the handkerchief and found himself in the presence of a man from thirty-eight to forty years of age, dressed in a Tunisian costume, — that is to say, a red cap with a long blue silk tassel, a vest of black cloth embroidered with gold, pantaloons of deep red, large and full gaiters of the same color, embroidered with gold like the vest, and yellow slippers; he had a splendid cashmere round his waist, and a small cimeter, sharp and curved, was passed through his girdle. Although of a paleness that was almost livid, this man had a remarkably handsome face; his eyes were penetrating and sparkling; his nose, straight and almost in line with his brow, exhibited the Greek type in all its purity, while his teeth, as white as pearls, were well set off by the black mustache that covered them.

But that paleness was striking; it might be imagined that he had been imprisoned for a long time in a tomb, and was unable to recover the healthy glow and hue of the living. He was not particularly tall, but extremely well made, and like the men of the South, had small hands and feet. But what astonished Franz, who had treated Gaetano's description as a fable, was the splendor of the apartment in which he found himself. The entire chamber was lined with crimson brocade worked with flowers of gold. In a recess was a kind of divan, surmounted by a stand of Arabian swords in silver scabbards, the handles resplendent with gems; from the ceiling hung a lamp of Venetian glass, of beautiful shape and color, while the feet rested on a Turkey carpet, in which they sunk to the instep; tapestry was suspended before the door by which Franz had entered, and also in front of another door, leading into a second apartment, which seemed to be brilliantly lighted up.

The host left Franz for a moment absorbed in his sur-

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prise, and moreover rendered him look for look, not taking his eyes off him. "Monsieur," he said at length, "a thousand excuses for the precaution taken in your introduction hither; but as during the greater portion of the year this island is deserted, if the secret of this abode were discovered, I should doubtless on my return hither find my temporary retirement in a state of great disorder, which would be exceedingly annoying, not for the loss it might occasion, but because I should not have the certainty I now possess of being able to separate myself at pleasure from all the rest of mankind. Let me now endeavor to make you forget this temporary unpleasantness, and offer you what no doubt you did not expect to find here, — that is to say, a tolerable supper and pretty comfortable beds."

"*Ma foi!* my dear host," replied Franz, "make no apologies. I have always observed that they bandage the eyes of those who penetrate enchanted palaces, — for instance, those of Raoul in 'The Huguenots;' and really I have nothing to complain of, for what I see is a sequel to the wonders of the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"Alas! I may say with Lucullus, 'If I could have anticipated the honor of your visit, I would have prepared for it.' But such as is my hermitage, it is at your disposal; such as is my supper, it is yours to share if you will. Ali, is the supper ready?"

At this moment the tapestry was moved aside, and a Nubian, black as ebony, and dressed in a plain white tunic, made a sign to his master that all was prepared in the dining-hall.

"Now," said the unknown to Franz, "I do not know if you are of my opinion, but I think nothing is more annoying than for two persons to remain two or three hours face to face without knowing by what name or title

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In the Cave of Sinbad the Sailor.

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to address one another. Pray observe that I too much respect the laws of hospitality to ask your name or title. I only request you to give me one by which I may have the pleasure of addressing you. As for myself, that I may put you at your ease, I tell you that I am generally called 'Sinbad the Sailor.'"

"And I," replied Franz, "will tell you, as I only require his wonderful lamp to make me precisely like Aladdin, that I see no reason why at this moment I should not be called Aladdin. That will keep us from going away from the East, whither I am tempted to think I have been conveyed by some good genius."

"Well, then, Signor Aladdin," replied the singular amphitryon, "you heard our repast announced; will you now take the trouble to enter the dining-hall, your humble servant going first to show the way?" At these words, moving aside the tapestry, Sinbad preceded his guest. Franz proceeded from one enchantment to another; the table was splendidly covered, and once convinced of this important point, he cast his eyes around him. The dining-hall was scarcely less striking than the boudoir he had just left; it was entirely of marble, with antique bas-reliefs of priceless value, and at the two ends of the hall, which was oblong, were two magnificent statues having baskets in their hands. These baskets contained four pyramids of magnificent fruit; there were the pine-apples of Sicily, pomegranates from Malaga, oranges from the Balearic Isles, peaches from France, and dates from Tunis. The supper consisted of a roast pheasant garnished with Corsican blackbirds; a boar's ham, *à la gelée*, a quarter of a kid, *à la tartare*, a glorious turbot, and a gigantic lobster. Between these large dishes were smaller ones containing various dainties. The dishes were of silver and the plates of Japanese porcelain.

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Franz rubbed his eyes to assure himself that this was not a dream. Ali alone was present to wait at table, and acquitted himself so admirably that the guest complimented his host thereupon.

"Yes," he replied, while he did the honors of the supper with much ease and grace, — "yes, he is a poor devil who is much devoted to me, and does all he can to prove it. He remembers that I saved his life, and as he has a regard for his head, he feels some gratitude towards me for having kept it on his shoulders."

Ali approached his master, took his hand, and kissed it.

"Would it be impertinent, Signor Sinbad," said Franz, "to ask you under what circumstances you performed that excellent deed?"

"Oh! it is a simple matter," replied the host. "It seems the fellow had been caught wandering nearer to the harem of the Bey of Tunis than etiquette permits to one of his color; and he was condemned by the bey to have his tongue cut out, and his hand and head cut off, — the tongue the first day, the hand the second, and the head the third. I always had a desire to have a mute in my service. I waited until his tongue had been cut out, and then proposed to the bey that he should sell me Ali for a splendid double-barrelled gun which I knew he was very eager to possess. He hesitated a moment, so intent was he on finishing up with the poor devil. But when I added to the gun an English cutlass with which I had shivered his Highness's yataghan, the bey yielded, and agreed to forgive the hand and head, but on condition that he would never again set foot in Tunis. This was a useless clause in the bargain, for whenever the coward sees the first glimpse of the shores of Africa, he runs down below, and can be induced to appear again only when we are out of sight of the third part of the globe."

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Franz remained a moment mute and pensive, hardly knowing what to think of the cruel *bonhomie* with which his host had related this incident. "And like the celebrated sailor whose name you have assumed," he said, by way of changing the conversation, "you pass your life in travelling?"

"Yes. It is in fulfilment of a vow which I made at a time when I little thought I should ever be able to accomplish it," said the unknown, with a singular smile. "I made some others also, which I hope I may fulfil in due season."

Although Sinbad pronounced these words with much calmness, his eyes darted gleams of singular ferocity.

"You have suffered a great deal, Monsieur?" said Franz, inquiringly.

Sinbad started and looked fixedly at him, as he replied, "What makes you suppose so?"

"Everything!" answered Franz, "your voice, your look, your pallid complexion, and even the life you lead."

"I! I live the happiest life I know, — the real life of a pacha. I am king of all creation. I am pleased with one place, and stay there; I get tired of it, and leave it. I am free as a bird, and have wings like one. My attendants obey me at a signal. Sometimes I amuse myself by carrying off from human justice some bandit it is in quest of, some criminal whom it pursues. Then I have my mode of dispensing justice, silent and sure, without respite or appeal, which condemns or pardons, and which no one sees. Ah! if you had tasted my life, you would not desire any other, and would never return to the world unless you had some great project to accomplish there."

"A vengeance, for instance!" observed Franz.

The unknown fixed on the young man one of those looks which penetrate into the depth of the heart

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and of the thoughts. "And why a vengeance?" he asked.

"Because," replied Franz, "you seem to me like a man who, persecuted by society, has a fearful account to settle with it."

"Ah!" responded Sinbad, laughing with his singular laugh, which displayed his white and sharp teeth. "You have not guessed rightly. Such as you see me, I am a sort of philosopher; and one day perhaps I shall go to Paris to rival M. Appert and the man in the Little Blue Cloak."

"And will that be the first time you will have made that journey?"

"Yes, it will. I must seem to you by no means curious, but I assure you that it is not my fault I have delayed it so long; I shall get around to it some day."

"And do you propose to make this journey soon?"

"I do not know; it depends on circumstances which are subject to uncertain contingencies."

"I should like to be there at the time you come, and I will endeavor to repay you as far as lies in my power for your liberal hospitality at Monte Cristo."

"I should avail myself of your offer with pleasure," replied the host; "but unfortunately, if I go there, I shall perhaps prefer to remain unknown."

Meantime they were proceeding with the supper, which however appeared to have been supplied solely for Franz, for the unknown scarcely touched one or two dishes of the splendid banquet to which his unexpected guest did ample justice. Then Ali brought on the dessert, or rather took the baskets from the hands of the statues and placed them on the table. Between the two baskets he placed a small silver cup, closed with a lid of the same metal. The care with which Ali placed this cup on the table roused Franz's

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curiosity. He raised the lid and saw a kind of greenish paste, something like preserved angelica, but which was entirely unknown to him. He replaced the lid, as ignorant of what the cup contained as he was before he had looked at it, and then casting his eyes towards his host he saw him smile at his disappointment.

"You cannot divine what sort of confection is contained in that little vase; and it perplexes you, does it not?"

"I confess it."

"Well, then, that green confection is nothing less than the ambrosia which Hebe served at the table of Jupiter."

"But," replied Franz, "this ambrosia, no doubt, in passing through mortal hands has lost its heavenly appellation and assumed a human name; in vulgar phrase, what may you term this composition? — for which, to say the truth, I do not feel any particular desire."

"Ah! thus it is that our material origin is revealed," cried Sinbad; "we frequently pass so near to happiness without seeing, without regarding it; or if we do see and regard it, yet without recognizing it. Are you a man for the substantials, and is gold your god? taste this, and the mines of Peru, Guzerat, and Golconda are opened to you. Are you a man of imagination, — a poet? taste this, and the boundaries of possibility disappear; the fields of infinite space open to you; you advance free in heart, free in mind, into the boundless realms of unfettered revelry. Are you ambitious, and do you seek to reach the high places of the earth? taste this, and in an hour you will be a king, — not a king of a petty kingdom hidden in some corner of Europe, like France, Spain, or England, but king of the world, king of the universe, king of creation; your throne will be established on the mountain to which Jesus was taken by Satan, and without being obliged to do homage to Satan, without being compelled

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to kiss his claw, you will be sovereign lord of all the kingdoms of the earth. Is it not tempting? And is it not an easy thing, since it is only to do thus? look!" At these words he uncovered the small cup which contained the substance so lauded, took a teaspoonful of the magic sweetmeat, raised it to his lips, and swallowed it slowly, with his eyes half shut and his head bent backward. Franz did not disturb him while he absorbed his favorite *bonne bouche*, but when he had finished, he inquired, —

"What, then, is this precious stuff?"

"Did you ever hear," asked the host, "of the Old Man of the Mountain, who attempted to assassinate Philippe Augustus?"

"Of course I have."

"Well, you know he reigned over a rich valley which was overhung by the mountain whence he derived his picturesque name. In this valley were magnificent gardens planted by Hassen-ben-Sabah, and in these gardens isolated pavilions. Into these pavilions he admitted the elect; and there, says Marco Polo, he gave them a certain herb to eat, which transported them to Paradise to the midst of ever blooming shrubs, ever ripe fruit, and ever lovely virgins. Now, what these happy persons took for reality was but a dream, but it was a dream so soft, so voluptuous, so enthralling, that they sold themselves body and soul to him who gave it to them. They were as obedient to his orders as to those of God; they went to the ends of the earth to strike down the victim indicated to them; and they died in torture without a murmur, — believing that death was but a quick transition to that life of delights of which the holy herb now before you had given them a slight foretaste."

"Then," cried Franz, "it is hashish! I know that — by name at least."

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"That is it precisely, Signor Aladdin; it is hashish, — the best and purest hashish of Alexandria; the hashish of Abou-Gor, the celebrated maker, the unique man, the man to whom there should be built a palace inscribed with these words, 'A grateful world to the dealer in happiness.'"

"Do you know," said Franz, "I have a very great inclination to judge for myself of the truth or exaggeration of your eulogies."

"Judge for yourself, Signor Aladdin; judge, but do not confine yourself to one trial. As in everything else, we must habituate the senses to any new impression, gentle or violent, sad or joyous. There is a struggle in nature against this divine substance, — in nature, which is not made for joy, and clings to pain. Nature, subdued, must yield in the combat; reality must succeed to the dream; and then the dream reigns supreme. Then the dream becomes life, and life becomes the dream. But what a change is wrought by that transfiguration, on comparing the pains of actual being with the joys of the fictitious existence! you desire to live no longer, but to dream thus forever. When you return to this mundane sphere from your visionary world, you seem to leave a Neapolitan spring for a Lapland winter, — to quit paradise for earth, heaven for hell! Taste the hashish, guest of mine, — taste the hashish!"

Franz's only reply was to take a teaspoonful of the marvellous preparation, about as much in quantity as his host had eaten, and lift it to his mouth. "The devil!" he said after having swallowed the divine confection, "I do not know if the result will be as agreeable as you describe, but the thing does not appear to me as succulent as you say."

"Because your palate has not yet attained the sublimity of the substance it tastes. Tell me, the first time you

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tasted oysters, tea, porter, truffles, and sundry other dainties which you now adore, did you like them? Can you comprehend how the Romans stuffed their pheasants with assafœtida, and the Chinese eat swallows' nests? Eh, no! Well, it is the same with hashish; only eat for a week, and nothing in the world will seem to you to equal the delicacy of its flavor, which now appears to you tasteless and nauseating. Let us now go into the side-chamber, — that is, into your chamber, — and Ali will bring us coffee and pipes."

They both arose, and while he who called himself Sinbad — and whom we have occasionally so named, that we might like his guest have some title by which to distinguish him — gave some orders to the servant, Franz entered the adjoining chamber. It was simply yet richly furnished. It was round, and a large divan completely encircled it. Divan, walls, ceiling, floor, were all covered with magnificent skins, as soft and downy as the richest carpets; there were skins of the lions of Atlas, with their large manes; skins of the Bengal tigers, with their striped hides; skins of the panthers of the Cape, spotted beautifully like those that appeared to Dante; skins of the bears of Siberia, and of the foxes of Norway; and all these skins were strewn in profusion one on the other, so that it seemed like walking over the most mossy turf, or reclining on the most luxurious bed. Both laid themselves down on the divan; chibouques with jasmine tubes and amber mouthpieces were within reach, and all prepared so that there was no need to smoke the same pipe twice. Each of them took one, which Ali lighted; Ali then retired to prepare the coffee. There was a moment's silence, during which Sinbad gave himself up to thoughts that seemed to occupy him incessantly, even in the midst of his conversation; and Franz abandoned himself to that mute revery

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into which we always sink when smoking excellent tobacco, which seems to remove with its smoke all the troubles of the mind, and to give the smoker in exchange all the visions of the soul.

Ali brought in the coffee.

"How do you take it?" inquired the unknown; "*à la francaise* or *à la turque*, strong or weak, with sugar or without, cool or boiling? As you please; it is ready in all ways."

"I will take it *à la turque*," replied Franz.

"And you are right," said his host; "it shows you have a taste for Oriental life. Ah! those Orientals, — they are the only men who know how to live. As for me," he added with one of those singular smiles which did not escape the young man, "when I have completed my affairs in Paris, I shall go and die in the East; and should you wish to see me again, you must seek me at Cairo, Bagdad, or Ispahan."

"*Ma foi!*" said Franz, "it would be the easiest thing in the world, — for I feel eagle's wings springing out at my shoulders, and with these wings I could make a tour of the world in four and twenty hours."

"Ah, ah! it is the hashish that is operating. Well, unfurl your wings, and fly into superhuman regions. Fear nothing, — there is a watch over you; and if your wings, like those of Icarus, melt before the sun, we are here to receive you."

He then said some Arabian words to Ali, who made a sign of obedience and withdrew, but remained near. As to Franz, a strange transformation had taken place in him. All the bodily fatigue of the day, all the preoccupation of mind which the events of the evening had brought on, disappeared, as they do in the early moments of repose, when we are still sufficiently conscious to be aware of the

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coming of slumber. His body seemed to acquire an airy lightness; his perception brightened in a remarkable manner; his senses seemed to redouble their power. The horizon continued to expand; it was not that gloomy horizon over which hovers a vague terror, and which he had seen before he slept, but a blue, transparent, unbounded horizon, with all the blue of the ocean, all the spangles of the sun, all the perfumes of the summer breeze. Then, in the midst of the songs of his sailors, — songs so clear and sounding that they would have made a divine harmony had their notes been taken down, — he saw the island of Monte Cristo, no longer as a threatening rock in the midst of the waves, but as an oasis lost in the desert. Then, as the boat approached, the songs became louder, — for an enchanting and mysterious harmony rose to heaven from this island, as if some fay-like Loreley or some enchanter like Amphion had wished to attract thither a soul or build there a city.

At length the boat touched the shore, but without effort, without shock, as lips touch lips; and he entered the grotto amid continued strains of most delicious melody. He descended, or rather seemed to descend, several steps, inhaling the fresh and balmy air, like that which may be supposed to reign around the grotto of Circe, formed from such perfumes as set the mind a-dreaming, and such fires as burn the very senses; and he saw again all he had seen before his sleep, from Sinbad, his singular host, to Ali, the mute attendant. Then all seemed to fade away and become confused before his eyes, like the last shadows of the magic lantern before it is extinguished; and he was again in the chamber of statues, lighted only by one of those pale and antique lamps which watch in the dead of the night over sleep or pleasure. They were the same statues, rich in form, in attraction, and poesy, with eyes

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of fascination, smiles of love, and flowing hair. They were Phryne, Cleopatra, Messalina, those three celebrated courtesans. Then among them glided like a pure ray, like a Christian angel in the midst of Olympus, a chaste figure, a calm shadow, a soft vision, which seemed to veil its virgin brow before these marble wantons. Then these three statues advanced towards him with looks of love, and approached the couch on which he was reposing, — their feet hidden in their long tunics, their throats bare, hair flowing like waves, and assuming attitudes which the gods could not resist, but which saints withstood, and looks inflexible and ardent like the serpent's on the bird; and then he gave way before these looks, as painful as a powerful grasp and as delightful as a kiss. It seemed to Franz that he closed his eyes, and that in his last look around he saw the modest statue completely veiled; and then his eyes being closed to all reality, his senses were opened to receive strange impressions.

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CHAPTER II.

THE WAKING.

When Franz returned to himself exterior objects seemed a second portion of his dream. He thought himself in a sepulchre into which scarcely penetrated, like a look of pity, a ray of the sun. He stretched forth his hand and touched stone; he rose to a sitting posture, and found himself on his burnoose in a bed of dry heather, very soft and odoriferous. The vision had entirely fled; and as if the statues had been but shadows coming from their tomb during his dream, they had vanished at his waking. He advanced several paces towards the point whence the light came, and to all the excitement of his dream succeeded the calmness of reality. He found that he was in a grotto, went towards the opening, and through an arched doorway saw a blue sea and an azure sky. The air and water were shining in the beams of the morning sun; on the shore the sailors were sitting, chatting and laughing; and at ten yards from them the boat was gracefully riding at anchor. There for some time he enjoyed the fresh breeze which played on his brow, and listened to the gentle noise of the waves, which came up on the beach and left on the rocks a lace of foam as white as silver. He abandoned himself for some time without reflection or thought to the divine charm which is in the things of Nature, especially after a fantastic dream; then gradually this outward life, so calm, so pure, so grand, showed him the unreality of his dream, and remembrances began to return to him. He recalled

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his arrival on the island, his presentation to a smuggler chief, a subterranean palace full of splendor, an excellent supper, and a spoonful of hashish. It seemed however, even in the face of open day, that at least a year had elapsed since all these things had happened, so deep was the impression made in his mind by the dream, and so strong a hold had it taken of his imagination. Thus every now and then his fancy placed amid the sailors, seated on a rock, or saw on the boat, moving with its motion, one of those shadows which had shared his dreams with their looks and their kisses. Otherwise, his head was perfectly clear and his body completely rested. There was no dulness in his brain; on the contrary, he felt a certain degree of lightness, a faculty of absorbing the pure air and enjoying the bright sunshine more vividly than ever.

He went gayly up to the sailors, who rose as soon as they perceived him; and the captain, accosting him, said, "The Signor Sinbad has left his compliments for your Excellency, and desires us to express the regret he feels at not being able to take his leave in person; but he trusts you will excuse him, as very important business calls him to Malaga."

"So then, Gaetano," said Franz, "this is, then, all reality; there exists a man who has received me on this island, entertained me right royally, and has departed while I was asleep?"

"He exists so really that you may see his little yacht with all her sails spread; and if you will use your glass, you will in all probability recognize your host in the midst of his crew."

So saying, Gaetano pointed in a direction in which a small vessel was making sail towards the southern point of Corsica. Franz adjusted his telescope and directed it

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towards the place indicated. Gaetano was not mistaken. At the stern the mysterious stranger was standing up, looking towards the shore, and holding a spy-glass in his hand. He was attired as he had been on the previous evening, and waved his pocket-handkerchief to his guest in token of adieu. Franz returned the salute by shaking his handkerchief in like manner. After a second a slight cloud of smoke was seen at the stern of the vessel, which rose gracefully as it expanded in the air, and then Franz heard a light report. "There, do you hear?" observed Gaetano; "he is bidding you adieu." The young man took his carbine and fired it in the air, but without any idea that the noise could be heard at the distance which separated the yacht from the shore.

"What are your Excellency's orders?" inquired Gaetano.

"In the first place, light me a torch."

"Ah, yes, I understand," replied the captain; "to find the entrance to the enchanted apartment. With much pleasure, your Excellency, if it would amuse you; and I will get you the torch you ask for. I too have had the idea you have, and two or three times the same fancy has come over me; but I have always given it up. Giovanni, light a torch," he added, "and give it to his Excellency."

Giovanni obeyed. Franz took the lamp and entered the subterranean grotto, followed by Gaetano. He recognized the place where he had slept by the bed of heather that was there; but it was in vain that he carried his torch all over the exterior surface of the grotto. He saw nothing except, by traces of smoke, that others had before him attempted the same thing, and like him, in vain. Yet he did not leave a foot of this granite wall, as impenetrable as futurity, without strict scrutiny; he did not see

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a fissure without introducing the blade of his hunting-sword into it, nor a projecting point on which he did not lean and press, in the hope that it would give way. All was vain; and he lost two hours in that examination without results. At the end of this time he gave up his research; Gaetano was triumphant.

When Franz appeared again on the shore, the yacht seemed like a small white speck on the horizon. He looked again through his glass, but even then he could not distinguish anything. Gaetano reminded him that he had come for the purpose of shooting goats, — which he had utterly forgotten. He took his fowling-piece and began to hunt over the island with the air of a man who is fulfilling a duty rather than enjoying a pleasure; and at the end of a quarter of an hour he had killed a goat and two kids. These animals, though wild and agile as chamois, were too much like domestic goats, and Franz could not consider them as game. Moreover, other ideas, much more powerful, occupied his mind. Since the evening before, he had really been the hero of one of the tales of the "Thousand and One Nights," and he was irresistibly attracted towards the grotto. Then, in spite of the failure of his first search, he began a second, after having told Gaetano to roast one of the two kids. The second visit was a long one, and when he returned the kid was roasted and the repast ready. Franz was sitting on the spot where he was on the previous evening when his mysterious host had invited him to supper; and he saw the little yacht, now like a sea-gull on the wave, continuing her flight towards Corsica. "Why," he remarked to Gaetano, "you told me that Signor Sinbad was going to Malaga; but it seems to me that he is going straight to Porto Vecchio."

"Don't you remember," said the captain, "I told you that among the crew there were two Corsican brigands?"

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"True! and he is going to land them?" added Franz.

"Precisely so," replied Gaetano. "Ah! he is a man who fears neither God nor Devil, they say, and would at any time run fifty leagues out of his course to do a poor devil a service."

"But such services as these might involve him with the authorities of the country in which he practises this kind of philanthropy," said Franz.

"Ah, well," replied Gaetano, with a laugh, "what does he care for the authorities? He smiles at them. Let them try to pursue him! why, in the first place, his yacht is not a ship but a bird, and he would beat any frigate three knots in every twelve; and if he were to throw himself on the coast, why, is n't he certain of finding friends everywhere?"

It was evident from all this that the Signor Sinbad, Franz's host, had the honor of being on excellent terms with the smugglers and bandits along the whole coast of the Mediterranean, — which placed him in a position singular enough. As to Franz, he had no longer any inducement to remain at Monte Cristo. He had lost all hope of detecting the secret of the grotto. He consequently despatched his breakfast, and his boat being ready, he hastened on board, and they were soon under way. At the mement the boat began her course they lost sight of the yacht, as it disappeared in the gulf of Porto Vecchio. With it was effaced the last trace of the preceding night; supper, Sinbad, hashish, statues, — all became buried in the same dream. The boat went on all day and all night, and next morning when the sun rose, they had lost sight of Monte Cristo. When Franz had once again set foot on shore, he forgot, for the moment at least, the events which had just passed, while he finished his affairs of pleasure at Florence, and then thought of nothing but

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how he should rejoin his companion, who was awaiting him at Rome. He set out therefore, and on the Saturday evening reached the Place de la Douane by the *malle-poste.* Apartments, as we have said, had been retained beforehand, and thus he had but to go to the hotel of Maître Pastrini. But this was not so easy a matter, for the streets were thronged with people, and Rome was already a prey to that low and feverish murmur which precedes all great events. At Rome there are four great events in every year, — the Carnival, the Holy Week, the Fête Dieu, and the St. Peter. All the rest of the year the city is in that state of dull apathy, between life and death, which renders it similar to a kind of station between this world and the next, — a sublime spot, a resting-place full of poetry and character, at which Franz had already halted five or six times, and at each time found it more marvellous and striking. At last he made his way through this mob, which was continually increasing and becoming more agitated, and reached the hotel. On his first inquiry he was told, with the impertinence peculiar to coachmen who have plenty of employment, and innkeepers whose houses are filled, that there was no room for him at the Hôtel de Londres. Then he sent his card to Maître Pastrini, and demanded Albert de Morcerf. This plan succeeded; and Maître Pastrini himself ran to him, excusing himself for having made his Excellency wait, scolding the waiters, taking the candlestick in his hand from the *cicerone,* who was ready to pounce on the traveller, and was about to lead him to Albert, when Morcerf himself appeared.

The apartments consisted of two small rooms and a closet. The two rooms looked on to the street, — a fact which Maître Pastrini commented upon as an inappreciable advantage. The remainder of the story was hired by a very rich gentleman, who was supposed to be a Sicilian or

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Maltese; but the host was unable to decide to which of the two nations the traveller belonged.

"Very good, Maître Pastrini," said Franz; "but we must have some supper instantly, and a carriage for to-morrow and the following days."

"As to supper," replied the landlord, "you shall be served immediately; but as for the carriage—"

"What as to the carriage?" exclaimed Albert. "Come, come, Maître Pastrini, no joking; we must have a carriage."

"Monsieur," replied the host, "we will do all in our power to procure you one; that is all I can say."

"And when shall we know?" inquired Franz.

"To-morrow morning," answered the innkeeper.

"Oh, the devil!" said Albert, "then we shall pay the more, that 's all; I see plainly enough. At Drake and Aaron's one pays twenty-five livres for common days, and thirty or thirty-five livres for Sundays and fêtes; add five livres for extras, — that will make forty, — and there 's an end of it."

"I fear," said the landlord, "that those gentlemen, even if you offer them twice that amount, will not be able to procure you a carriage."

"Then they must put horses to mine," said Albert. "It is a little worse for the journey, but that 's no matter."

"There are no horses."

Albert looked at Franz like a man who hears a reply he does not understand. "Do you understand that, my dear Franz? — no horses!" he said; "but can't we have post-horses?"

"They have been all hired this fortnight, and there are none left but those absolutely necessary to the service."

"What do you say to that?" asked Franz.

"I say that when a thing completely surpasses my comprehension, I am accustomed not to dwell on that

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thing, but to pass to another. Is supper ready, Maître Pastrini?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

"Well, then, let us sup."

"But the carriage and horses?" said Franz.

"Be easy, my dear boy; they will come in due season. It is only a question of how much shall be charged for them."

Morcerf then, with that admirable philosophy which believes that nothing is impossible to a full purse or a well-lined pocket-book, supped, went to bed, slept soundly, and dreamed that he rode through the Carnival in a coach with six horses.

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CHAPTER III.

ROMAN BANDITS.

THE next morning Franz woke first, and instantly rang the bell. The sound had not yet died away when Maître Pastrini himself entered.

"Well, Excellency," said the landlord, triumphantly, and without waiting for Franz to question him, "I feared yesterday, when I would not promise you anything, that you were too late; there is not a single carriage to be had — that is, for the last three days."

"Yes," returned Franz; "that is, for those on which it is absolutely necessary."

"What is the matter?" said Albert, entering; "no carriage to be had?"

"Precisely, my dear fellow," said Franz; "you have hit it the first time."

"Well! your Eternal City is a devilish nice city."

"That is to say, Excellency," replied Pastrini, who was desirous to keep up the dignity of the capital of the Christian world in the eyes of his guest, "there are no carriages to be had from Sunday to Tuesday evening, but from now till Sunday you can have fifty if you please."

"Ah! that is something," said Albert; "to-day is Thursday, and who knows what may arrive between this and Sunday?"

"Ten or twelve thousand travellers will arrive," replied Franz, "which will make it still more difficult."

"My friend," said Morcerf, "let us enjoy the present without gloomy forebodings."

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"At least," asked Franz, "we can have a window?"

"Where?"

"Looking on the Rue du Cours, to be sure."

"Ah, a window!" exclaimed Maître Pastrini, — "utterly impossible; there was only one left on the fifth floor of the Doria Palace, and that has been let to a Russian prince for twenty sequins a day."

The two young men looked at each other with an air of stupefaction.

"Well," said Franz to Albert, "do you know what is the best thing we can do? It is to pass the Carnival at Venice; there we are sure of obtaining gondolas if we cannot have carriages."

"Ah, the devil! no," cried Albert; "I came to Rome to see the Carnival, and I will, though I see it on stilts."

"Bravo! an excellent idea! We will disguise ourselves as monster Punchinellos or shepherds of the Landes, and we shall have complete success."

"Do your Excellencies still wish for a carriage from now to Sunday morning?"

"*Parbleu!*" said Albert, "do you think we are going to run about on foot in the streets of Rome like lawyers' clerks?"

"I hasten to comply with your Excellencies' wishes; only I tell you beforehand the carriage will cost you six piastres a day."

"And as I am not a millionnaire like our neighbor," said Franz, "I warn you that as I have been four times before at Rome, I know the prices of all the carriages. We will give you twelve piastres for to-day, to-morrow, and the day after, and then you will make a good profit."

"But, Excellency —" said Pastrini, still striving to gain his point.

"Now go," returned Franz, "or I shall go myself and

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bargain with your *affettatore*, who is mine also. He is an old friend of mine, who has plundered me pretty well already; and in the hope of making more out of me he will fix upon a price smaller than I am now offering you. You will then lose the difference, and that will be your fault."

"Do not give yourself the trouble, Excellency," returned Maître Pastrini, with that smile of the Italian speculator who avows himself defeated; "I will do all I can, and I hope you will be satisfied."

"And now we understand each other."

"When do you wish the carriage to be here?"

"In an hour."

"In an hour it will be at the door."

An hour later, the carriage was in fact awaiting the two young men. It was a modest *fiacre*, which was elevated to the rank of a private carriage in honor of the occasion; but in spite of its humble exterior, the young men would have thought themselves happy had they been able to procure such a carriage for the last three days of the Carnival.

"Excellency," cried the *cicerone*, seeing Franz approach the window, "shall I bring the carriage nearer to the palace?"

Accustomed as Franz was to the Italian phraseology, his first impulse was to look round him, but these words were addressed to him. Franz was the "Excellency," the vehicle was the "carriage," and the Hôtel de Londres was the "palace." The laudatory habit of the people was well exhibited in that single sentence.

Franz and Albert descended; the carriage approached the palace; their Excellencies stretched their legs along the seats; the *cicerone* sprang into the seat behind. "Where do your Excellencies wish to go?" asked he.

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"To St. Peter's first, and then to the Colosseum," returned Albert.

But Albert did not know that it takes a day to see St. Peter's, and a month to study it. The day was passed at St. Peter's alone. Suddenly the daylight began to fade away. Franz took out his watch; it was half-past four. They returned to the hotel; at the door Franz ordered the coachman to be ready at eight. He wished to show Albert the Colosseum by moonlight, as he had shown him St. Peter's by daylight. When we show to a friend a city we have already visited, we feel the same pride as when we point out a woman whose lover we have been. He was to leave the city by the Porta del Popolo, skirt the outer wall, and re-enter by the Porta San Giovanni; thus they would behold the Colosseum without being in some measure prepared by the sight of the Capitol, the Forum, the Arch of Septimius Severus, the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, and the Via Sacra.

They sat down to dinner. Maître Pastrini had promised them a banquet; he gave them a tolerable repast. At the end of the dinner he entered in person. Franz concluded he came to hear his dinner praised, and began accordingly; but at the first words the landlord interrupted him. "Excellency," said he, "I am delighted to have your approbation; but it was not for that I came."

"Did you come to tell us you have procured a carriage?" asked Albert, lighting his cigar.

"No; and your Excellencies will do well not to think of that any longer. At Rome things can or cannot be done; when you are told anything cannot be done, there is an end of it."

"It is much more convenient at Paris,—when anything cannot be done, you pay double and it is done directly."

"That is what all the French say," returned Maître

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Pastrini, somewhat piqued; "for that reason I do not understand why they travel."

"But," said Albert, emitting a volume of smoke and balancing his chair on its hind legs, "only madmen, or blockheads such as we are, travel. Men in their senses do not quit their hotel in the Rue du Helder, their walk on the Boulevard de Gand, and the Café de Paris."

It is of course understood that Albert resided in the street mentioned, appeared every day on the fashionable walk, and dined frequently at the only *café* where you can really dine, — that is, if you are on good terms with the waiters. Maître Pastrini remained silent a short time; it was evident that he was musing over this answer, which did not seem very clear.

"But," said Franz, in his turn interrupting his host's meditations, "you had some motive for coming here; may I beg to know what it was?"

"Ah, yes; you have ordered your carriage for eight o'clock?"

"I have."

"You intend visiting *il Colosseo.*"

"That is to say, *le Colisée?*"

"It is the same thing. You have told your coachman to leave the city by the Porta del Popolo, to drive round the walls, and re-enter by the Porta San Giovanni?"

"These are my words exactly."

"Well, this route is impossible."

"Impossible!"

"Very dangerous, to say the least."

"Dangerous! and why?"

"On account of the famous Luigi Vampa."

"Pray who may this famous Luigi Vampa be?" inquired Albert; "he may be very famous at Rome, but I can assure you he is quite unknown at Paris."

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"What! do you not know him?"

"I have not that honor."

"You have never heard his name?"

"Never."

"Well, then, he is a bandit compared to whom the Decesaris and the Gasparones were mere children."

"Now, then, Albert," cried Franz, "here is a bandit for you at last!"

"I forewarn you, Maître Pastrini, that I shall not believe one word of what you are going to tell us. That point being settled between us, you may say all you wish; I will listen. Once upon a time, — well, go ahead!"

Maître Pastrini turned round to Franz, who seemed to him the more reasonable of the two. We must do him justice; he had had a great many Frenchmen in his house, but had never been able to comprehend them. "Excellency," said he, gravely, addressing Franz, "if you look upon me as a liar, it is useless for me to say anything; it was for your interest I —"

"Albert does not say you are a liar, Maître Pastrini," said Franz; "he says he will not believe you, — that's all. But I will believe all you say; so proceed."

"But your Excellency well understands that if any one doubts my veracity —"

"Maître Pastrini," returned Franz, "you are more susceptible than Cassandra, who was a prophetess, and yet no one believed her, while you at least are sure of the credence of half your auditory. Come, make an effort, and tell us who this M. Vampa is."

"I have told your Excellency; he is the most famous bandit we have had since the days of Mastrilla."

"Well, what has this bandit to do with the order I have given the coachman to leave the city by the Porta del Popolo, and to re-enter by the Porta San Giovanni?"

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"This," replied Maître Pastrini, — "that you will go out by one, but I very much doubt your returning by the other."

"Why?" asked Franz.

"Because after nightfall you are not safe fifty yards from the gates."

"On your honor, is that true?" cried Albert.

"Monsieur the Viscount," returned Maître Pastrini, hurt at Albert's repeated doubts of the truth of his assertions, "I do not say this to you, but to your companion, who knows Rome, and knows too that these things are not to be laughed at."

"My dear fellow," said Albert, turning to Franz, "here is an admirable adventure; we will fill our carriage with pistols, blunderbusses, and double-barrelled guns. Luigi Vampa comes to take us, and we take him; we bring him back to Rome and present him to his Holiness the Pope, who asks how he can recompense so great a service; then we merely ask for a carriage and a pair of horses, and we see the Carnival in a carriage, and doubtless the Roman people will crown us at the Capitol, and proclaim us, like Curtius and Horatius Cocles, the preservers of the country."

While Albert proposed this scheme, Maître Pastrini's face assumed an expression impossible to describe.

"And pray," asked Franz, "where are these pistols, blunderbusses, and other deadly weapons with which you intend filling the carriage?"

"Not in my armory, for at Terracina I was plundered even of my hunting-knife."

"I shared the same fate at Aquapendente."

"Do you know, Maître Pastrini," said Albert, lighting a second cigar at the first, "that this practice is very convenient for robbers, and that it has the appearance of a plan for sharing with them?"

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Doubtless Maître Pastrini found this pleasantry compromising, for he answered only half the question, addressing himself to Franz, as the only one likely to listen with attention: "Your Excellency knows that it is not customary to offer defence when attacked by bandits."

"What!" cried Albert, whose courage revolted at the idea of being plundered tamely, "not make any resistance!"

"No, for it would be useless. What can you do against a dozen bandits who spring out of some pit, ruin, or aqueduct, and attack you all at once?"

"Eh, *parbleu!* I will make them kill me."

The innkeeper turned to Franz with an air that seemed to say, "Your friend is decidedly mad."

"My dear Albert," returned Franz, "your answer is sublime, and worthy the 'Let him die,' of Corneille. But when Horace made that answer the safety of Rome was concerned, while here there is only the question of gratifying a caprice; and it would be ridiculous to risk our lives for a caprice."

"Ah, *per Bacco!*" cried Maître Pastrini, "that is good! that is speaking to some purpose!"

Albert poured himself out a glass of *lacryma Christi*, which he sipped at intervals, muttering some unintelligible words.

"Well, Maître Pastrini," said Franz, "now that my companion is quieted, and you have seen how peaceful my intentions are, tell me who is this Luigi Vampa. Is he a shepherd or a nobleman; young or old; tall or short? Describe him, in order that if we meet him by chance, like Jean Sbogar or Lara, we may recognize him."

"You could not apply to any one better able to inform you on all these points; for I knew him when he was a child, and one day when I fell into his hands going from Ferentino to Alatri, he, fortunately for me, recollected me,

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and not only set me free without ransom, but made me a present of a very splendid watch, and related his history to me."

"Let us see the watch," said Albert.

Maître Pastrini drew from his fob a magnificent Breguet, bearing the name of its maker, the Parisian stamp, and a count's coronet.

"Here it is," said he.

"*Peste!*" returned Albert, "I compliment you on it; I have its fellow," — he took his watch from his waistcoat pocket, — "and it cost me three thousand livres."

"Let us hear the history," said Franz, drawing up an easy-chair and making a sign to Maître Pastrini to seat himself.

"Your Excellencies permit it?" asked the host.

"*Pardieu!*" cried Albert, "you are not a preacher, to speak standing!"

The host sat down, after having made each of them a respectful bow, which meant to say he was ready to tell them all they wished to know concerning Luigi Vampa. "You tell me," said Franz, at the moment Maître Pastrini was about to open his mouth, "that you knew Luigi Vampa when he was a child; he is still a young man, then?"

"A young man! he is hardly two and twenty. Oh, he is a rattling blade, who will have a career, you may be sure."

"What do you think of that, Albert, — at two and twenty to be thus famous?"

"Yes, at his age Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon, who have all made some noise in the world, were not so advanced."

"So," continued Franz, "the hero of this history is only two and twenty?"

"Scarcely so much, as I have had the honor to tell you."

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"Is he tall or short?"

"Of the middle height, — about the same stature as his Excellency," returned the host, pointing to Albert.

"Thanks for the comparison," said Albert, with a bow.

"Go on, Maître Pastrini," continued Franz, smiling at his friend's susceptibility. "To what class of society does he belong?"

"He was a shepherd-boy attached to the farm of the Comte de San Felice, situated between Palestrina and the Lake of Gabri. He was born at Pampinara, and entered the count's service when he was five years old; his father was also a shepherd, who owned a small flock and lived by the wool and the milk which he sold at Rome. When quite a child, the little Vampa was of a most extraordinary disposition. One day, when he was seven years old, he came to the curé of Palestrina, and prayed him to teach him to read. It was somewhat difficult, for he could not quit his flock; but the good curé went every day to say mass at a little hamlet too poor to pay a priest, and which having no other name was called Borgo. He told Luigi that he might meet him on his return, and that then he would give him a lesson, warning him that it would be short, and that he must profit as much as possible by it. The child accepted joyfully. Every day Luigi led his flock to graze on the road that leads from Palestrina to Borgo; every day, at nine o'clock in the morning, the priest and the boy sat down on a bank by the wayside, and the little shepherd took his lesson out of the priest's breviary. At the end of three months he had learned to read. This was not enough, — he must now learn to write. The priest procured from a teacher of writing at Rome three alphabets, — one in large letters, one in letters of medium size, and one in small letters, — and showed him how by the help

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of a sharp instrument he could trace the letters on a slate, and thus learn to write. The same evening, when the flock was safe at the farm, the little Luigi hastened to the smith at Palestrina, took a large nail, forged it, sharpened it, and formed a sort of antique stylus. The next morning, having collected a quantity of slates, he began his lessons. At the end of three months he had learned to write. The curé, astonished at his quickness and intelligence, made him a present of pens, paper, and a penknife. This involved new study, but nothing compared to the first; at the end of a week he wrote as well with the pen as with the stylus. The curé related this anecdote to the Comte de San Felice, who sent for the little shepherd, made him read and write before him, ordered his attendant to let him eat with the domestics, and to give him two piastres a month. With this Luigi purchased books and pencils. He applied to everything his imitative powers, and like Giotto, when young, he drew on his slate sheep, houses, and trees. Then, with his knife, he began to carve all sorts of objects in wood; it was thus that Pinelli, the famous sculptor, had commenced.

"A girl of six or seven — that is, a little younger than Vampa — tended sheep on a farm near Palestrina; she was an orphan, born at Valmontone, and was named Teresa. The two children met, sat down near each other, let their flocks mingle together, played, laughed, and conversed together; in the evening they separated the flock of the Comte de San Felice from those of the Baron de Cervetri, and the children returned to their respective farms, promising to meet the next morning, and the next day they kept their word. Thus they grew, side by side, until Vampa was twelve and Teresa eleven. Meantime, their natural dispositions revealed themselves. While he still followed his inclination for the fine arts, which Luigi

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had carried as far as he could in his solitude, he was sad by fits, ardent by starts, angry by caprice, and always sarcastic. None of the lads of Pampinara, of Palestrina, or of Valmontone had been able to gain any influence over him, or even to become his companion. His disposition (always inclined to exact concessions rather than to make them) kept him aloof from all friendships. Teresa alone ruled by a look, a word, a gesture, this impetuous character, which was pliant under the hand of a woman, but under the hand of any man whatever would have resisted until it broke.

"Teresa was, on the contrary, lively and gay, but coquettish to excess. The two piastres that Luigi received every month from the Comte de San Felice's steward, and the price of all the little carvings in wood he sold at Rome, were expended in ear-rings, necklaces, and gold hair-pins; so that thanks to her friend's generosity, Teresa was the most beautiful and the best attired peasant near Rome.

"The two children continued to grow up together, passing all their time with each other, and giving themselves up to the wild ideas of their different characters. Thus in all their dreams, their wishes, and their conversations, Vampa saw himself the captain of a vessel, general of an army, or governor of a province. Teresa saw herself rich, superbly attired, and attended by a train of liveried domestics. Then, when they had thus passed the day in building castles in the air, they separated their flocks and descended from the elevation of their dreams to the reality of their humble position.

"One day the young shepherd told the count's steward that he had seen a wolf come out of the Sabine Mountains and prowl around his flock. The steward gave him a gun; this was what Vampa longed for. This gun had

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an excellent barrel, made at Breschia, and carrying a ball with the precision of an English rifle; but one day the count broke the stock, and had then cast the gun aside. This, however, was nothing to a sculptor like Vampa. He examined the ancient stock, calculated what change it would require to adapt the gun to his shoulder, and made a fresh stock, so beautifully carved that it would have brought fifteen or twenty piastres, had he chosen to sell it; but nothing could be farther from his thoughts. For a long time a gun had been the young man's greatest ambition. In every country where independence has taken the place of liberty, the first desire of a manly heart is to possess a weapon, which at once renders him capable of defence or attack, and by rendering its owner terrible often makes him feared. From this moment Vampa devoted all his leisure time to perfecting himself in the use of this precious weapon; he purchased powder and ball, and everything served him for a mark, — the trunk of some old and moss-grown olive-tree that grew on the Sabine Mountains; the fox, as he quitted his earth on some marauding excursion; the eagle that soared above their heads. And thus he soon became so expert that Teresa overcame the terror she at first felt at the report, and amused herself by watching him while he directed the ball wherever he pleased, with as much accuracy as if placed by the hand.

"One evening a wolf emerged from a pine wood near which they were usually stationed, but had scarcely advanced ten yards ere he was dead. Proud of this exploit, Vampa took the dead animal on his shoulders, and carried him to the farm. All these circumstances had gained Luigi considerable reputation. The man of superior abilities always finds admirers, go where he will. He was spoken of as the most adroit, the strongest, and the most courageous *contadino* for ten leagues round; and although

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Teresa was universally allowed to be the most beautiful girl of the Sabines, no one had ever spoken to her of love, because it was known that she was beloved by Vampa. And yet these two had never confessed their love to one another; they had grown up side by side, like two trees which intertwine their roots in the ground and their branches in the air, and whose perfume rises together to the heavens. Only their wish to see each other had become a necessity, and they would have preferred death to a day's separation. Teresa was sixteen and Vampa eighteen. About this time a band of brigands that had established itself in the Lepini Mountains began to be much spoken of. The brigands had never been really extirpated from the neighborhood of Rome. Sometimes a chief is wanted, but when a chief presents himself he rarely wants a band.

"The celebrated Cucumetto, pursued in the Abruzzo, driven out of the kingdom of Naples, where he had carried on a regular war, had crossed the Garigliano, like Manfred, and had come between Sonnino and Juperno to take refuge on the banks of the Amasine. He strove to reorganize a band, and followed in the footsteps of Decesaris and Gasperone, whom he hoped to surpass. Many young men of Palestrina, Frascati, and Pampinara disappeared. Their disappearance at first caused much inquietude; but it was soon known that they had joined the band of Cucumetto. After some time Cucumetto became the object of universal attention; the most extraordinary traits of ferocious daring and brutality were related of him. One day he carried off a young girl, the daughter of a surveyor of Frosinone. The bandits' laws are positive: a young girl belongs first to him who carries her off; then the rest draw lots for her, and she is abandoned to their brutality until death relieves her sufferings. When her parents are sufficiently rich to

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pay a ransom, a messenger is sent to treat concerning it. The prisoner is hostage for the security of the messenger; should the ransom be refused, the prisoner is irrevocably lost. The young girl's lover was in Cucumetto's troop; his name was Carlini. When she recognized her lover, the poor girl extended her arms to him and believed herself safe; but Carlini felt his heart sink, for he but too well knew the fate that awaited her. However, as he was a favorite with Cucumetto; as he had for three years faithfully served him; and as he had saved his life by shooting a dragoon who was about to cut him down, — he hoped he would have pity on him. He took him apart, while the young girl, seated at the foot of a huge pine that stood in the centre of the forest, formed with her picturesque head-dress a veil to hide her face from the lascivious gaze of the bandits. There he told him all, — his affection for the prisoner, their promises of mutual fidelity, and how every night since he had been near they had met in a ruin.

"It so happened that night that Cucumetto had sent Carlini to a neighboring village, so that he had been unable to go to the place of meeting. Cucumetto had been there, however, — by accident, as he said, — and had carried the maiden off. Carlini besought his chief to make an exception in Rita's favor, as her father was rich, and could pay a large ransom. Cucumetto seemed to yield to his friend's entreaties, and bade him find a shepherd to send to Rita's father at Frosinone. Carlini flew joyfully to Rita, telling her she was saved, and bidding her write to her father to inform him what had occurred, and that her ransom was fixed at three hundred piastres. Twelve hours' delay was all that was granted, — that is, until nine the next morning. The instant the letter was written Carlini seized it, and hastened to the plain to find

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a messenger. He found a young shepherd watching his flock. The natural messengers of the bandits are the shepherds, who live between the city and the mountains, between civilized and savage life. The boy undertook the commission, promising to be in Frosinone in less than an hour. Carlini returned, eager to see his mistress, and announce the joyful intelligence. He found the troop in the glade, supping off the provisions exacted as contributions from the peasants; but his eye vainly sought Rita and Cucumetto among them. He inquired where they were, and was answered by a burst of laughter. A cold perspiration burst from every pore, and his hair stood on end. He repeated his question. One of the bandits rose and offered him a glass filled with wine of Orvietto, saying, 'To the health of the brave Cucumetto and the fair Rita!' At this moment Carlini heard the cry of a woman; he divined the truth, seized the glass, broke it across the face of him who presented it, and rushed towards the spot whence the cry came. After going a hundred yards he turned the corner of the thicket; he found Rita senseless in the arms of Cucumetto. At the sight of Carlini, Cucumetto rose, a pistol in each hand. The two brigands looked at each other for a moment, — the one with a smile of lasciviousness on his lips, the other with the pallor of death on his brow. It seemed that something terrible was about to pass between these two men; but by degrees Carlini's features relaxed. His hand, which had grasped one of the pistols in his belt, fell to his side. Rita lay between them. The moon lighted the group.

"'Well,' said Cucumetto, 'have you executed your commission?' 'Yes, Captain,' returned Carlini. 'At nine o'clock to-morrow, Rita's father will be here with the money.' 'It is well; in the mean time, we will have a merry night. This young girl is charming, and does credit

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to your taste. Now, as I am not selfish, we will return to our comrades and draw lots for her.' 'You have determined, then, to abandon her to the common law?' said Carlini. 'Why should an exception be made in her favor?' 'I thought that my entreaties—' 'What right have you, any more than the rest, to ask for an exception?' 'It is true.' 'But never mind,' continued Cucumetto, laughing, 'sooner or later your turn will come.' Carlini's teeth clinched convulsively. 'Now, then,' said Cucumetto, advancing towards the other bandits, 'are you coming?' 'I follow you.' Cucumetto departed without losing sight of Carlini, for doubtless he feared lest he should strike him unawares; but nothing betrayed a hostile design on Carlini's part. He was standing, his arms folded, near Rita, who was still insensible. Cucumetto fancied for a moment the young man was about to take her in his arms and fly; but this mattered little to him now Rita had been his, and as for the money, three hundred piastres distributed among the band was so small a sum that he cared little about it. He continued to follow the path to the glade; but to his great surprise, Carlini arrived almost as soon as himself. 'Let us draw lots! let us draw lots!' cried all the brigands, when they saw the chief.

"Their demand was fair; and the chief inclined his head in sign of acquiescence. The eyes of all shone fiercely as they made their demand, and the red light of the fire made them look like demons. The names of all, including Carlini, were placed in a hat, and the youngest of the band drew forth a ticket; the ticket bore the name of Diavolaccio. He was the man who had proposed to Carlini the health of their chief, and to whom Carlini had replied by breaking the glass across his face. A large wound, extending from the temple to the mouth, was

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bleeding profusely. Diavolaccio, seeing himself thus favored by fortune, burst into a loud laugh. 'Captain,' said he, 'just now Carlini would not drink your health when I proposed it to him; propose mine to him, and let us see if he will be more condescending to you than to me.' Every one expected an explosion on Carlini's part; but to their great surprise, he took a glass in one hand and a flask in the other, and filling it, 'Your health, Diavolaccio,' said he, calmly, and he drank it off without his hand trembling in the least. Then sitting down by the fire, 'My supper,' said he; 'my expedition has given me an appetite.' 'Well done, Carlini!' cried the brigands; 'that is acting like a good fellow;' and they all formed a circle round the fire, while Diavolaccio disappeared. Carlini ate and drank as if nothing had happened. The bandits looked at him with astonishment, not understanding his strange impassiveness, when upon the ground behind them they heard a heavy footstep. They turned round and saw Diavolaccio bearing the young girl in his arms. Her head hung back, and her long hair swept the ground. As they entered the circle, the bandits could perceive by the firelight the unearthly pallor of the young girl and of Diavolaccio. This apparition was so strange and so solemn that every one rose with the exception of Carlini, who remained seated, and ate and drank calmly. Diavolaccio advanced amid the most profound silence and laid Rita at the captain's feet. Then every one could understand the cause of that pallor of the young girl and of the bandit. A knife was plunged up to the hilt in Rita's left breast. Every one looked at Carlini; the sheath at his belt was empty. 'Ah, ah!' said the chief, 'I now understand why Carlini stayed behind.'

"All savage natures appreciate a desperate deed. No other of the bandits would perhaps have done the same;

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but they all understood what Carlini had done. 'Now, then,' cried Carlini, rising in his turn and approaching the corpse, his hand on the butt of one of his pistols, 'does any one dispute the possession of this woman with me?' 'No,' returned the chief, 'she is thine.' Carlini raised her in his arms and carried her out of the circle of light around the fire. Cucumetto placed his sentinels for the night, and the bandits wrapped themselves in their cloaks and lay down before the fire. At midnight the sentinel gave the alarm, and in an instant all were on the alert. It was Rita's father, who brought his daughter's ransom in person. 'Here,' said he to Cucumetto, — 'here are three hundred piastres; give me back my child.' But the chief, without taking the money, made a sign to him to follow him. The old man obeyed. They both advanced beneath the trees, through whose branches streamed the moonlight. Cucumetto stopped at last and pointed to two persons grouped at the foot of a tree. 'There,' said he, 'demand thy child of Carlini; he will tell thee what has become of her;' and he returned to his companions.

"The old man remained motionless; he felt that some great and unforeseen misfortune hung over his head. At length he advanced towards the group, which he could not comprehend. As he approached, Carlini raised his head, and the forms of two persons became visible to the old man's eyes. A female lay on the ground, her head resting on the knees of a man who was seated by her; as he raised his head the female's face became visible. The old man recognized his child, and Carlini recognized the old man. 'I expected thee,' said the bandit to Rita's father. 'Wretch!' returned the old man, 'what hast thou done?' and he gazed with terror on Rita, pale and bloody, a knife buried in her bosom. A ray of moonlight poured

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through the trees and lighted up the face of the dead. 'Cucumetto had violated thy daughter,' said the bandit; 'I loved her, therefore I slew her, — for she would have served as the sport of the whole band.' The old man spoke not, and grew pale as death. 'Now,' continued Carlini, 'if I have done wrongly, avenge her;' and withdrawing the knife from the wound in Rita's bosom, he held it out to the old man with one hand, while with the other he tore open his vest. 'Thou hast done well!' returned the old man, in a hoarse voice; 'embrace me, my son.' Carlini threw himself, sobbing like a child, into the arms of his mistress's father. These were the first tears the man of blood had ever wept. 'Now,' said the old man, 'aid me to bury my child.' Carlini fetched two pickaxes, and the father and the lover began to dig at the foot of a huge oak, beneath which the young girl was to repose. When the grave was formed, the father embraced her first, and then the lover; afterwards, one taking the head, the other the feet, they placed her in the grave. Then they knelt on each side of the grave and said the prayers of the dead. Then, when they had finished, they cast the earth over the corpse until the grave was filled. Then, extending his hand, the old man said, 'I thank you, my son; and now leave me alone.' 'Yet — ' replied Carlini. 'Leave me, I command you.' Carlini obeyed, rejoined his comrades, folded himself in his cloak, and soon appeared as deep asleep as the rest.

"It had been resolved the night before to change their encampment. An hour before daybreak Cucumetto aroused his men and gave the word to march. But Carlini would not quit the forest without knowing what had become of Rita's father. He went towards the place where he had left him. He found the old man suspended from one of the branches of the oak which shaded his daugh-

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ter's grave. He then took an oath of bitter vengeance over the dead body of the one and the tomb of the other. But he was unable to complete this oath, for two days afterwards, in a rencontre with the Roman carbineers, Carlini was killed. There was some surprise, however, that as he was with his face to the enemy he should have received a ball between his shoulders. That astonishment ceased when one of the brigands remarked to his comrades that Cucumetto was stationed ten paces in Carlini's rear when he fell. On the morning of the departure from the forest of Frosinone he had followed Carlini in the darkness, had heard his oath of vengeance, and like a wise man had prevented its fulfilment.

"They told ten other stories of this bandit chief not less strange than this. Thus, from Fondi to Perouse, every one trembled at the name of Cucumetto. These narratives were frequently the themes of conversation between Luigi and Teresa. The young girl trembled very much at all these tales. But Vampa reassured her with a smile, tapping the butt of his good fowling-piece, which threw its ball so well; and if that did not restore her courage, he pointed to a crow perched on some dead branch, took an aim, touched the trigger, and the bird fell dead at the foot of the tree. Time passed on; and the two young persons had agreed to be married when Vampa should be twenty and Teresa nineteen years of age. They were both orphans, and had only their employer's leave to ask, which had been already sought and obtained. One day when they were talking over their plans for the future, they heard two or three reports of fire-arms, and then suddenly a man came out of the wood near which the two young persons used to graze their flocks, and hurried towards them. When he came within hearing, he exclaimed, 'I am pursued; can you conceal me?'

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They knew full well that this fugitive must be a bandit; but there is a natural sympathy between the Roman brigand and the Roman peasant, and the latter is always ready to aid the former. Vampa, without saying a word, hastened to the stone that closed up the entrance to their grotto, drew it away, made a sign to the fugitive to take refuge there in a retreat unknown to every one, closed the stone upon him, and then went and resumed his seat by Teresa. Instantly afterwards four carbineers on horseback appeared on the edge of the wood; three of them appeared to be looking for the fugitive, while the fourth dragged a brigand prisoner by the neck. The three carbineers looked around them on all sides, saw the young peasants, and galloping up, interrogated them. They had seen no one. 'That is very annoying,' said the brigadier; 'for the man we are looking for is the chief.' 'Cucumetto?' cried Luigi and Teresa at the same moment. 'Yes,' replied the brigadier; 'and as his head is valued at a thousand Roman crowns, there would have been five hundred for you if you had helped us to catch him.' The two young persons exchanged looks. The brigadier had a moment's hope. Five hundred Roman crowns are three thousand livres, and three thousand livres are a fortune for two poor orphans who are going to be married. 'Yes, it is very annoying,' said Vampa; 'but we have not seen him.'

"Then the carbineers scoured the country in different directions, but in vain; then after a time they disappeared. Vampa then removed the stone, and Cucumetto came out. He had seen, through the crevices in the granite, the two young peasants talking with the carbineers, and guessed the subject of their parley. He had read in the countenances of Luigi and Teresa their steadfast resolution not to surrender him, and he drew from

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his pocket a purse full of gold, which he offered to them. But Vampa raised his head proudly; as to Teresa, her eyes sparkled when she thought of all the fine gowns and gay jewelry she could buy with this purse of gold.

"Cucumetto was a cunning fiend who had assumed the form of a brigand instead of a serpent; and this look of Teresa revealed to him that she was a worthy daughter of Eve. He returned to the forest, pausing several times on his way under the pretext of saluting his protectors. Several days elapsed, and they neither saw nor heard of Cucumetto. The time of the Carnival was at hand. The Comte de San Felice announced a grand masked ball, to which all that were distinguished in Rome were invited. Teresa had a great desire to see this ball. Luigi asked permission of his protector, the steward, that she and he might be present among the servants of the house. This was granted. The ball was given by the count for the particular pleasure of his daughter Carmela, whom he adored. Carmela was precisely the age and figure of Teresa, and Teresa was as handsome as Carmela. On the evening of the ball Teresa was attired in her best, — her most brilliant hair ornaments and gayest glass beads; she was in the costume of the women of Frascati. Luigi wore the very picturesque garb of the Roman peasant at holiday time. They both mingled, as they had leave to do, with the servants and peasants.

"The fête was magnificent, — not only was the villa brilliantly illuminated, but thousands of colored lanterns were suspended from the trees in the garden; and very soon the palace overflowed to the terraces, and the terraces to the garden-walks. At each cross-path were an orchestra, and tables spread with refreshments; the guests stopped, formed quadrilles, and danced in every part of the grounds they pleased. Carmela was attired like a woman of Son-

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nino. Her cap was embroidered with pearls, the pins in her hair were of gold and diamonds, her girdle was of Turkey silk with large embroidered flowers, her bodice and skirt were of cashmere, her apron of Indian muslin, and the buttons of her corset were of jewels. Two of her companions were dressed, the one as a woman of Nettuno, and the other as a woman of La Riccia. Four young men of the richest and noblest families of Rome accompanied them with Italian freedom, which has not its parallel in any other country of the world. They were attired as peasants of Albano, Velletri, Civita Castellana, and Sora. I need not tell you that these peasant costumes, like those of the women, were brilliant with gold and jewels.

"Carmela wished to make a uniform quadrille, but there was one woman wanting. She looked all around her, but not one of the guests had a costume similar to her own or those of her companions. The Comte de San Felice pointed out to her, in the group of peasants, Teresa, who was hanging on Luigi's arm. 'Will you allow me, Father?' said Carmela. 'Certainly,' replied the count; 'are we not in Carnival time?' Carmela turned towards the young man who was talking with her, and saying a few words to him, pointed with her finger to Teresa. The young man followed with his eyes the lovely hand which made this indication, bowed in obedience, and then went to Teresa and invited her to dance in a quadrille directed by the count's daughter. Teresa felt something like a flame pass over her face; she looked at Luigi, who could not refuse his assent. Luigi slowly relinquished Teresa's arm, which he had held beneath his own, and Teresa, accompanied by her elegant cavalier, took her appointed place with much agitation in the aristocratic quadrille. Certainly, in the eyes of an artist the exact and severe costume of Teresa had a very different character from that of Carmela and

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her companions; but Teresa was frivolous and coquettish, and thus the embroidery and muslins, the cashmere waist-girdles, all dazzled her, and the reflection of sapphires and diamonds almost turned her giddy brain.

"Luigi felt a sensation hitherto unknown arising in his mind. It was like an acute pain which gnawed at his heart, and then passed thrillingly throughout his frame, chasing through his veins, and pervading his entire body. He followed with his eyes each movement of Teresa and her cavalier. When their hands touched, he felt as though he should swoon; every pulse beat with violence, and it seemed as though a bell were ringing in his ears. When they spoke, although Teresa listened timidly and with downcast eyes to the conversation of her cavalier, as Luigi could read in the ardent looks of the good-looking young man that his language was that of praise, it seemed as if the whole world was turning round with him, and all the voices of hell were whispering in his ears ideas of murder and assassination. Then fearing that his paroxysm might get the better of him, he clutched with one hand the branch of a tree against which he was leaning, and with the other convulsively grasped the dagger with a carved handle which was in his belt, and which, unwittingly, he drew from the scabbard from time to time. Luigi was jealous! He felt that influenced by her ambition and coquettish disposition, Teresa might escape him.

"The young peasant girl, at first timid and almost frightened, soon recovered herself. I have said that Teresa was handsome, but this is not all; Teresa had the fascination of those wild graces which are so much more potent than our affected and studied elegancies. She had almost all the honors of the quadrille, and if she was envious of the Comte de San Felice's daughter, I will not undertake to say that Carmela was not jealous of her;

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and with overpowering compliments her handsome cavalier led her back to the place whence he had taken her and where Luigi awaited her. Twice or thrice during the dance the young girl had glanced at Luigi, and each time she saw that he was pale and that his features were agitated; once even the blade of his knife, half drawn from its sheath, had dazzled her eyes with its sinister gleam. Thus she was almost trembling when she resumed her lover's arm. The quadrille had been very successful; and it was evident there was a great demand for a repetition of it. Carmela alone objected to it; but the Comte de San Felice begged his daughter so earnestly that she acceded. One of the cavaliers then hastened to invite Teresa, without whom it was impossible to form the quadrille, but the young girl had disappeared. In fact, Luigi had not the strength to support another such trial, and half by persuasion and half by force, he had removed Teresa to another part of the garden. Teresa had yielded in spite of herself; but when she looked at the agitated countenance of the young man, she understood by his silence and trembling voice that something strange was passing within him. She herself was not free from internal emotion, and without having done anything wrong, yet fully comprehended that Luigi would be in the right if he should reproach her. Why, she did not know, but she did not the less feel that she had somehow deserved to be blamed. However, to Teresa's great astonishment Luigi remained mute, and not a word escaped his lips the rest of the evening. But when the chill of the night had driven away the guests from the gardens, and the gates of the villa were closed for the fête indoors he took Teresa away; and as he left her at her home, he said, 'Teresa, what were you thinking of as you danced opposite the young Comtesse de San Felice?' 'I thought,' replied the young girl,

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with all the frankness of her nature, 'that I would give half my life for a costume such as she wore.' 'And what said your cavalier to you?' 'He said it only depended on myself to have it, and I had only one word to say.' 'He was right,' said Luigi; 'do you desire it as ardently as you say?' 'Yes.' 'Well, then, you shall have it!'

"The young girl, much astonished, raised her head to look at him; but his face was so gloomy and terrible that her words froze to her lips. As Luigi spoke thus, he left her. Teresa followed him with her eyes into the darkness as long as she could, and when he had quite disappeared she entered her apartment with a sigh.

"That night a great accident happened, no doubt from the imprudence of some servant who had neglected to extinguish the lights. The Villa de San Felice took fire in the rooms adjoining the very apartment of the lovely Carmela. Wakened in the night by the light of the flames, she had sprung out of bed, wrapped herself in a dressing-gown, and attempted to escape by the door; but the corridor by which she hoped to fly was already a prey to the flames. She had then returned to her room, calling for help as loudly as she could, when suddenly her window, which was twenty feet from the ground, was opened; a young peasant jumped into the chamber, seized her in his arms, and with superhuman skill and strength conveyed her to the turf of the grass-plot, where she fainted. When she recovered, her father was by her side. All the servants surrounded her, offering her assistance. An entire wing of the villa was burned down; but what was that, since Carmela was safe and uninjured? Her preserver was everywhere sought for, but did not appear; he was inquired for everywhere, but no one had seen him. Carmela was greatly troubled that she had not recognized him. As the count was immensely rich, setting aside the peril to Carmela, —

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which in view of her miraculous escape seemed to him rather a new favor of Providence than an actual misfortune, — the loss occasioned by the conflagration was to him but a trifle.

"The next day at the usual hour the two young peasants were on the borders of the forest. Luigi arrived first. He came towards Teresa in high spirits, and seemed to have completely forgotten the events of the previous evening. The young girl was visibly thoughtful; but seeing Luigi so cheerful, she on her part assumed a smiling air, which was natural to her when no excitement of passion came to disturb her. Luigi took her arm beneath his own, and led her to the door of the grotto. There he paused. The young girl, perceiving that there was something extraordinary, looked at him steadfastly. 'Teresa,' said Luigi, 'yesterday evening you told me you would give all the world to have a costume similar to that of the count's daughter.' 'Yes,' replied Teresa, with astonishment; 'but I was mad to utter such a wish.' 'And I replied, "Very well, you shall have it."' 'Yes,' replied the young girl, whose astonishment increased at every word uttered by Luigi, 'but of course your reply was only to please me.' 'I have promised no more than I have given you, Teresa,' said Luigi, proudly. 'Go into the grotto and dress yourself.' At these words he drew away the stone and showed Teresa the grotto, lighted up by two wax lights, which burned on each side of a splendid mirror; on a rustic table, made by Luigi, were spread out the pearl necklace and the diamond pins, and on a chair at the side was laid the rest of the costume.

"Teresa uttered a cry of joy, and without inquiring whence this attire came, or even thanking Luigi, darted into the grotto, transformed into a dressing-room. Luigi pushed the stone behind her, for he saw on the crest of a

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small adjacent hill between him and Palestrina, a traveller on horseback, who stopped a moment as if uncertain of his road, and was thus visible against the azure sky with that distinctness of outline peculiar to the perspective of southern countries. When he saw Luigi, he put his horse into a gallop and advanced towards him. Luigi was not mistaken. The traveller, who was going from Palestrina to Tivoli, had mistaken his way. The young man directed him; but as at the distance of a quarter of a mile the road again divided into three ways, and on reaching these the traveller might again stray from his route, he begged Luigi to be his guide. Luigi threw his cloak on the ground, placed his carbine on his shoulder, and freed from his heavy covering, preceded the traveller with the rapid step of a mountaineer, which a horse can scarcely keep up with. In ten minutes Luigi and the traveller reached the cross-roads alluded to by the young shepherd. On arriving there, with an air as majestic as that of an emperor he stretched his hand towards that one of the roads which the traveller was to follow. 'That is your road, Excellency; and now you cannot again mistake.' 'And here is your recompense,' said the traveller, offering the young herdsman some pieces of small money. 'Thank you,' said Luigi, drawing back his hand; 'I render a service, I do not sell it.' 'Well,' replied the traveller, who seemed used to this difference between the servility of a man of the cities and the pride of the mountaineer, 'if you refuse pay, you will perhaps accept of a present.' 'Ah, yes, that is another thing.' 'Then,' said the traveller, 'take these two Venetian sequins and give them to your bride, to make herself a pair of ear-rings.' 'And then do you take this poniard,' said the young herdsman; 'you will not find one better carved between Albana and Civita Castellana.' 'I accept it,' answered the traveller; 'but then the obligation will be on my side, for this poniard is

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worth more than two sequins.' 'For a dealer, perhaps; but for me, who engraved it myself, it is hardly worth a piastre.' 'What is your name?' inquired the traveller. 'Luigi Vampa,' replied the shepherd, in the same manner in which he would have said, 'Alexander, King of Macedon;' 'and yours?' 'I,' said the traveller, 'am called Sinbad the Sailor.' "

Franz d'Épinay started with surprise. "Sinbad the Sailor?" he said.

"Yes," replied the narrator; "that was the name which the traveller gave to Vampa as his own."

"Well, and what may you have to say against this name?" inquired Albert. "It is a very pretty name; and the adventures of the gentleman of that name amused me very much in my youth, I must confess."

Franz said no more. The name of Sinbad the Sailor, as may well be supposed, awakened in him a world of recollections. "Proceed!" said he to the host.

"Vampa put the two sequins haughtily into his pocket, and slowly returned by the way he had gone. As he came within two or three hundred paces of the grotto, he thought he heard a cry. He listened to know whence this sound could proceed. A moment afterwards and he heard his own name pronounced distinctly. The cry proceeded from the grotto. He bounded like a chamois, cocking his carbine as he went, and in a moment reached the summit of a hill opposite to that on which he had perceived the traveller. There the cries for help came to him more distinctly. He cast his eyes around him, and saw a man carrying off Teresa, as the Centaur Nessus carried Dejanira. This man, who was hastening towards the wood, was already three-quarters of the way on the road from the grotto to the forest. Vampa measured the distance; the man was at least two hundred paces in advance of him, and there was not a chance of overtaking him.

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The young shepherd stopped as if his feet had been rooted to the ground; then he put the butt of his carbine to his shoulder, took aim at the ravisher, followed him for a second in his track, and then fired. The ravisher stopped suddenly, his knees bent under him, and he fell with Teresa in his arms. The young girl rose instantly; but the man lay on the earth struggling in the agonies of death. Vampa then rushed towards Teresa — for at ten paces from the dying man her legs had failed her and she had dropped on her knees; so that the young man feared that the ball that had brought down his enemy had also wounded his betrothed. Fortunately, she was unscathed; and it was fright alone that had overcome Teresa. When Luigi had assured himself that she was safe and unharmed, he turned towards the wounded man. He had just expired, with clinched hands, his mouth in a spasm of agony, and his hair on end in the sweat of death. His eyes remained open and menacing. Vampa approached the body and recognized Cucumetto.

"From the day on which the bandit had been saved by the two young peasants, he had been enamoured of Teresa, and had sworn she should be his. From that time he had watched them, and profiting by the moment when her lover had left her alone while he guided the traveller on his way, had carried her off, and believed he at length had her in his power, when the ball, directed by the unerring skill of the young herdsman, had pierced his heart. Vampa gazed on him for a moment without betraying the slightest emotion; while on the contrary Teresa, shuddering in every limb, dared not approach the slain ruffian but by degrees, and threw a hesitating glance at the dead body over the shoulder of her lover. Suddenly Vampa turned towards his mistress; 'Ah, ah!' said he, 'good, good! you are attired; it is now my turn to dress myself.'

"Teresa was clothed from head to foot in the garb of

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the Comte de San Felice's daughter. Vampa took Cucumetto's body in his arms and conveyed it to the grotto, while in her turn Teresa remained outside. If a second traveller had passed he would have seen a strange thing, — a shepherdess watching her flock, clad in a cashmere gown, with ear-rings and necklace of pearls, diamond pins, and buttons of sapphires, emeralds, and rubies. He would no doubt have believed that he had returned to the times of Florian, and would have declared on reaching Paris that he had met a shepherdess of the Alps seated at the foot of the Sabine Hill. At the end of a quarter of an hour Vampa quitted the grotto; his costume was no less elegant than that of Teresa. He wore a vest of garnet-colored velvet, with buttons of cut gold; a silk waistcoat covered with embroidery; a Roman scarf tied round his neck; a cartouche-box worked with gold and red and green silk; sky-blue velvet breeches fastened above the knee with diamond buckles; garters of deer-skin worked with a thousand arabesques; and a hat whereon hung ribbons of all colors. Two watches hung from his girdle, and a splendid poniard was in his belt. Teresa uttered a cry of admiration. Vampa in this attire resembled a painting by Léopold Robert or by Schnetz. He had assumed the entire costume of Cucumetto. The young man saw the effect produced on his betrothed, and a smile of pride passed over his lips. 'Now,' he said to Teresa, 'are you ready to share my fortune, whatever it may be?' 'Oh, yes!' exclaimed the young girl, enthusiastically. 'And follow me wherever I go?' 'To the world's end.' 'Then take my arm and let us go on; we have no time to lose.' The young girl took her lover's arm without asking him whither he was conducting her, — for he appeared to her at this moment as handsome, proud, and powerful as a god. They went towards the forest and soon entered it. All the paths of the mountain were of course well known to Vam-

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pa. He therefore went forward without a moment's hesitation, although there was no beaten track; but he knew his path by looking at the trees and bushes, and thus they kept on advancing for nearly an hour and a half. At the end of this time they had reached the thickest of the forest. A torrent, whose bed was dry, led into a deep gorge. Vampa took this wild road, which, enclosed between two ridges and shadowed by the tufted umbrage of the pines, seemed, but for the difficulties of its descent, that path to Avernus of which Virgil speaks. Teresa had become alarmed at the wild and deserted look of the plain around her, and pressed closely against her guide, not uttering a syllable; but as she saw him advance with even step and composed countenance, she endeavored to repress her emotion. Suddenly, about ten paces from them, a man advanced from behind a tree and aimed at Vampa. 'Not another step,' he said, 'or you are a dead man!' 'What, then!' said Vampa, raising his hand with a gesture of disdain, while Teresa, no longer able to restrain her alarm, clung closely to him; 'do wolves rend each other?' 'Who are you?' inquired the sentinel. 'I am Luigi Vampa, shepherd of the farm of San Felice.' 'What do you want?' 'I would speak with your companions who are in the recess at Rocca Bianca.' 'Follow me, then,' said the sentinel; 'or as you know your way, go first.' Vampa smiled disdainfully at this precaution of the bandit, went before Teresa, and continued to advance with the same firm and easy step as before. At the end of ten minutes the bandit made them a sign to stop. The two young persons obeyed. Then the bandit thrice imitated the cry of a crow; a croak answered this signal. 'Good!' said the sentry; 'you may now advance.' Luigi and Teresa again set forward; as they advanced, Teresa clung tremblingly to her lover as she saw through the trees arms appear and the barrels of carbines shine. The

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retreat of Rocca Bianca was at the top of a small mountain, which no doubt in former days had been a volcano, — a volcano extinct before the days when Remus and Romulus had deserted Alba to come and found the city of Rome. Teresa and Luigi reached the summit, and all at once found themselves in the presence of twenty bandits. 'Here is a young man who seeks and wishes to speak to you,' said the sentinel. 'What has he to say?' inquired the young man who was in command in the chief's absence. 'I wish to say that I am tired of a shepherd's life,' was Vampa's reply. 'Ah, I understand,' said the lieutenant; 'and you seek admittance into our ranks?' 'Welcome!' cried several bandits of Ferrusino, Pampinara, and Anagni, who had recognized Luigi Vampa. 'Yes, but I come to ask something more than to be your companion.' 'And what may that be?' inquired the bandits, with astonishment. 'I come to ask to be your captain,' said the young man. The bandits shouted with laughter. 'And what have you done to aspire to this honor?' demanded the lieutenant. 'I have killed your chief, Cucumetto, whose dress I now wear; and I set fire to the Villa de San Felice to procure a wedding-dress for my betrothed.' An hour afterwards Luigi Vampa was chosen captain, *vice* Cucumetto deceased."

"Well, my dear Albert," said Franz, turning towards his friends, "what think you of citizen Luigi Vampa?"

"I say he is a myth," replied Albert, "and never had an existence."

"And what may a myth be?" inquired Pastrini.

"The explanation would be too long, my dear landlord," replied Franz. "And you say that Maître Vampa exercises his profession at this moment in the environs of Rome?"

"Yes, with a boldness of which no bandit before him ever gave an example."

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"Then the police have vainly tried to lay hands on him?"

"Why, you see, he has a good understanding with the shepherds in the plains, the fishermen of the Tiber, and the smugglers of the coast. They seek for him in the mountains, and he is on the waters; they follow him on the waters, and he is on the open sea. Then they pursue him, and he has suddenly taken refuge in the Isle of Giglio, of Guanouti, or Monte Cristo; and when they hunt for him there, he reappears suddenly at Albano, Tivoli, or La Riccia."

"And how does he behave towards travellers?"

"Alas! his plan is very simple. It depends on the distance he may be from the city whether he gives eight hours, twelve hours, or a day wherein to pay their ransom; and when that time has elapsed he allows another hour's grace. At the sixtieth minute of this hour, if the money is not forthcoming he blows out the prisoner's brains with a pistol-shot, or plants his dagger in his heart, and that settles the account."

"Well, Albert," inquired Franz of his companion, "are you still disposed to go to the Colosseum by the outer boulevards?"

"Certainly," said Albert, "if the way be picturesque."

The clock struck nine as the door opened, and a coachman appeared. "Excellencies," said he, "the coach is ready."

"Well, then," said Franz, "let us to the Colosseum."

"By the Porta del Popolo, or by the streets, your Excellencies?"

"By the streets, *morbleu!* by the streets!" cried Franz.

"Ah, my dear fellow," said Albert, rising and lighting his third cigar, "really, I thought you had more courage." So saying, the two young men went down the staircase, and got into the carriage.

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CHAPTER IV.

AN APPARITION.

FRANZ had so appointed his route that during the ride to the Colosseum they passed not a single ancient ruin; so that no gradual preparation was made on the mind for the colossal proportions of the gigantic building they came to admire. The road selected was a continuation of the Via Sistina; then, by cutting off the right angle of the street in which stands Santa Maria Maggiore, and proceeding by the Via Urbana and San Pietro in Vincoli, the travellers would find themselves directly opposite the Colosseum. This itinerary possessed another great advantage, — that of leaving Franz at full liberty to indulge his deep revery upon the subject of the story recounted by Maître Pastrini, in which his mysterious host of the Isle of Monte Cristo was so strangely mixed up. Seated with folded arms in a corner of the carriage, he continued to ponder over the singular history he had so lately listened to, and to ask himself an interminable number of questions touching its various circumstances, without, however, arriving at a satisfactory reply to any of them. One fact more than the rest brought his friend "Sinbad the Sailor" back to his recollection, and that was the mysterious sort of inti-

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macy that seemed to exist between the brigands and the sailors; and Pastrini's account of Vampa's having found refuge on board the vessels of smugglers and fishermen, reminded Franz of the two Corsican bandits he had found supping so amicably with the crew of the little yacht, which had even deviated from its course and touched at Porto Vecchio for the sole purpose of landing them. The very name assumed by his host of Monte Cristo, and repeated by the landlord of the Hôtel de Londres, proved to him that his island friend was playing the same philanthropic part on the shores of Piombino, Civita Vecchia, Ostia, and Gaëta, as on those of Corsica, Tuscany, and Spain; and further, Franz remembered that he had spoken of Tunis and Palermo, which showed how far his circle of acquaintances extended.

But however the mind of the young man might be absorbed in these reflections, they were at once dispersed at the sight of the dark frowning ruins of the stupendous Colosseum, through the various openings of which the pale moonlight played and flickered like the unearthly gleam from the eyes of the wandering dead. The carriage stopped near the Mesa Sudans; the door was opened; and the young men, eagerly alighting, found themselves opposite a *cicerone*, who appeared to have sprung up from the ground.

The usual guide from the hotel having followed them, they had two of them; nor is it possible at Rome to avoid this superfluity of guides. Besides the ordinary *cicerone* who seizes upon you when you set foot in your hotel and never quits you while you remain in the city, there is also a special *cicerone* belonging to each monument, — nay, almost to each part of a monument. It may therefore be easily imagined that there is no scarcity of guides at the Colosseum, — that wonder of all ages, which Martial

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thus eulogizes: "Let Memphis cease to boast the barbarous miracles of her pyramids, and let the wonders of Babylon be talked of no more among us; all other works must give place to the immense amphitheatre of the Cæsars, and all voices of Fame should unite to celebrate that monument."

As for Albert and Franz, they essayed not to escape from their ciceronian tyrants; and indeed it would have been especially difficult to do so, since the guides alone are permitted to visit these monuments with torches in their hands. The young men made no resistance, but surrendered themselves unreservedly to their conductors. Franz had already made ten similar excursions to the Colosseum, while his companion trod for the first time the classic memorial of Flavius Vespasian; and to his credit be it spoken, his mind, even amid the glib loquacity of the guides, was strongly impressed. In fact, without seeing it no one can form any idea of the majesty of such a ruin, all whose proportions appear twice as large in the mysterious light of that southern moon, whose rays have the effect of a twilight in the east. Scarcely therefore had the reflective Franz walked a hundred steps beneath the interior porticos of the ruin, when abandoning Albert to the guides, who would by no means yield their prescriptive right to exhibit to him the Den of Lions, the Gladiators' Chamber, and the Gallery of the Cæsars, he ascended a dilapidated staircase, and leaving them to their prescribed course of sight-seeing, went quietly to sit in the shadow of a column and opposite a large chasm, which permitted him to enjoy a full and undisturbed view of the gigantic dimensions of this majestic ruin.

Franz had remained nearly a quarter of an hour hidden by the shadow of a column, whence his eyes followed the motions of Albert and his guides, who, holding torches in

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their hands, had emerged from a vomitarium placed at the opposite extremity of the Colosseum, and then again disappeared down the steps conducting to the seats reserved for the Vestal Virgins, resembling, as they glided along, some restless shades following the flickering glare of so many ignes-fatui, when all at once his ear caught a sound resembling that of a stone rolling down the staircase opposite the one by which he had himself ascended. There was nothing remarkable in the circumstance of a piece of granite giving way and falling heavily below; but it seemed to him that the substance that fell gave way beneath the pressure of a foot, and also that some one who endeavored as much as possible to prevent his footsteps from being heard, was approaching the spot where he sat. Conjecture soon became certainty, — for the figure of a man appeared, gradually emerging from the darkness as he ascended the staircase, the summit of which was lighted by the moon, while its steps descended into obscurity. He might be a traveller who like Franz preferred the enjoyment of solitude and his own thoughts to the frivolous gabble of the guides, — so that his appearance there was not surprising; but the hesitation with which he proceeded onwards, stopping and listening with anxious attention at every step he took, convinced Franz that he had come with a definite purpose, and that he was expecting some one. By an instinctive impulse Franz withdrew as much as possible behind his pillar. About ten feet from the spot where himself and the stranger were placed, the roof had given way, leaving a large round aperture through which might be seen the blue vault of heaven thickly studded with stars. Around this opening, which had possibly for ages permitted a free entrance to the moonlight, grew a quantity of creeping plants, whose delicate green branches stood out in bold relief against the clear azure of the firmament,

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while large masses of thick strong fibrous shoots forced their way through the chasm and hung floating to and fro like so many waving strings. The person whose mysterious arrival had attracted the attention of Franz stood in a kind of half-light that rendered it impossible to distinguish his features, although his dress was easily made out. He wore a large brown mantle, one fold of which thrown over his left shoulder served likewise to mask the lower part of his countenance, while the upper part was completely hidden by his broad-brimmed hat. The lower part of his dress was more distinctly visible by the bright rays of the moon, which entering through the broken ceiling showed that he wore boots of polished leather, over which descended trousers of black cloth. Evidently he belonged to high society, if not to the aristocracy.

After a few moments the stranger began to show signs of impatience, when a slight noise was heard outside the aperture in the roof, and almost immediately a dark shadow seemed to obstruct the light, and the figure of a man was clearly seen gazing with eager scrutiny on the immense space beneath him; then, as he perceived the man in the mantle, he grasped a floating mass of thickly-matted boughs and glided down by their help to within three or four feet of the ground, and then leaped lightly on his feet. He wore the costume of a Transteverian.

"I beg your Excellency's pardon for keeping you waiting," said the man, in the Roman dialect; "but I don't think I'm many minutes after my time. Ten o'clock has just struck by the clock of St. Jean de Latran."

"Say not a word about being late," replied the stranger, in purest Tuscan; "'t is I who am too soon. But even if you had caused me to wait a little while, I should have felt quite sure that the delay was not occasioned by any fault of yours."

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"Your Excellency is right," said the man; "I came here direct from the Château St. Ange, and I had an immense deal of trouble before I could get to speak to Beppo."

"And who is Beppo?"

"Oh, Beppo is employed in the prison; and I give him so much a year to let me know what is going on within his Holiness's château."

"Indeed! You are a provident person, I see."

"Why, you see, no one knows what may happen. Perhaps some of these days I may be entrapped like poor Peppino, and may be very glad to have some little nibbling mouse to gnaw the meshes of my net."

"Briefly, what did you learn?"

"That two executions of considerable interest will take place on Tuesday, at two o'clock, as is customary at Rome at the commencement of all great festivals. One of the culprits will be *mazzolato;* he is an atrocious villain, who murdered the priest who brought him up, and deserves not the smallest pity. The other sufferer is sentenced to be *decapitato;* and he, your Excellency, is poor Peppino."

"What can you expect? You have inspired not only the pontifical Government, but also the neighboring States, with such fear that they are glad of an opportunity to make an example."

"But Peppino did not even belong to my band; he was merely a poor shepherd, whose only crime consisted in furnishing us with provisions."

"Which makes him your accomplice to all intents and purposes. But mark the distinction with which he is treated: instead of being knocked on the head as you would be if once they caught hold of you, he is simply sentenced to be guillotined. In that way the amusements

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of the day are diversified, and there is a spectacle to please every spectator."

"Without reckoning the wholly unexpected one I am preparing to surprise them with."

"My good friend," said the man in the cloak, "excuse me for saying that you seem to me precisely in the mood to commit some act of folly."

"I am in the mood to prevent the execution of the poor devil who has got into this scrape solely through having served me. By the Madonna! I should despise myself as a coward did I desert the brave fellow in his present extremity."

"And what do you mean to do?"

"To surround the scaffold with twenty of my best men, who at a signal from me will rush forward when Peppino is brought for execution, and by the assistance of their stilettos drive back the guard and carry off the prisoner."

"That seems to me as hazardous as uncertain, and I am quite sure that my scheme is far better than yours."

"And what is your Excellency's project?"

"Just this: I will so advantageously bestow ten thousand piastres that the person receiving them shall obtain a respite till next year for Peppino; and during that year I will so bestow one thousand additional piastres that he will escape from prison."

"And do you feel sure of succeeding?"

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed in French the man in the cloak.

"What did your Excellency say?" inquired the other.

"I say, my good fellow, that I will do more single-handed with my gold than you and all your band could effect with stilettos, pistols, carbines, and blunderbusses included. Leave me, then, to act, and have no fears for the result."

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"Very good! but if you fail, we shall be ready."

"Take what precautions you please, but rely upon my obtaining the reprieve."

"Remember the execution is fixed for the day after to-morrow, and that you have but one day to work in."

"And what then? Is not a day divided into twenty-four hours, each hour into sixty minutes, and every minute subdivided into sixty seconds? Now, in 86,400 seconds very many things can be done."

"And how shall I know whether your Excellency has succeeded or not?"

"Oh! that is very easily arranged. I have engaged the three lower windows at the Café Rospoli; should I have obtained the requisite pardon for Peppino, the two outside windows will be hung with yellow damask, and the centre with white having a large cross in red marked on it."

"And whom will you employ to carry the reprieve to the officer directing the execution?"

"Send one of your men disguised as a penitent friar, and I will give it to him; in that dress he can approach the scaffold itself and deliver the official order to the officer who in his turn will hand it to the executioner. In the mean time, acquaint Peppino with what we have determined on, to prevent his dying of fear or losing his senses; in either case a useless expense will have been incurred for him."

"Your Excellency," said the man, "you are fully persuaded of my entire devotion to you, are you not?"

"Nay, I flatter myself that there can be no doubt of it," replied the cavalier in the cloak.

"Well, then, if you save Peppino, henceforward you shall receive not only devotedness, but obedience."

"Have a care how far you pledge yourself, my good friend, for I may remind you of your promise at some per-

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haps not very distant period, when I, in my turn, may require your aid and influence."

"Let that day come sooner or later, your Excellency will find me what I have found you in this my heavy trouble; and if from the other end of the world you but write me word to do such or such a thing, conclude it done, for done it shall be, on the word and faith of —"

"Hush!" interrupted the stranger; "I hear a noise."

"'T is some travellers who are visiting the Colosseum by torchlight."

"'T were better we should not be seen together. Those guides are nothing but spies, and might possibly recognize you; and however I may be honored by your friendship, my worthy friend, if once the extent of our intimacy were known, I am afraid my reputation would suffer thereby."

"Well, then, if you obtain the reprieve?"

"The middle window at the Café Rospoli will be hung with white damask bearing on it a red cross."

"And if you fail?"

"Then all three windows will have yellow draperies."

"And then?"

"And then, my good fellow, use your daggers in any way you please; and I further promise you to be there as a spectator of your prowess."

"All is then understood between us. Adieu, your Excellency; depend upon me as firmly as I do upon you."

Saying these words, the Transteverian disappeared down the staircase; while his companion, muffling his features more closely than before in the folds of his mantle, passed almost close to Franz, and descended to the arena by an outward flight of steps. The next minute Franz heard himself called by Albert, who made the

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lofty building re-echo with the sound of his friend's name. Franz, however, did not obey the summons till he had satisfied himself the two men had gone, — not wishing them to learn that there had been a witness of their interview who, if unable to recognize their faces, had at least heard every word that passed. Ten minutes later Franz was on the road to the Hôtel d'Espagne, listening with indifference to the learned dissertation delivered by Albert, after the manner of Pliny and Calpurnius, touching the iron-pointed nets used to prevent the ferocious beasts from springing on the spectators. Franz let him proceed without interruption; he longed to be alone that he might without interruption ponder over all that had occurred. One of those two men was an entire stranger to him, but not so the other; and though Franz had been unable to distinguish his features, wrapped in his mantle or obscured by the shadow, the tones of his voice had made too powerful an impression on him the first time he heard them for him ever to forget them. There was especially in his tones of raillery a certain metallic vibration which had startled him among the ruins of the Colosseum as in the grotto of Monte Cristo. He was therefore well satisfied that this man was no other than "Sinbad the Sailor."

Now, under any other circumstances, so great was his curiosity about this strange being, Franz would have made himself known to him; but in the present instance, the confidential nature of the conversation he had overheard suggested to him the reasonable apprehension that his appearance at such a time would be anything but agreeable. As we have seen, therefore, he had allowed the man to depart without addressing him, — promising himself that if he should meet him again he would not allow him to escape a second time. In vain did Franz endeavor to forget

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the many perplexing thoughts which assailed him; in vain did he court the refreshment of sleep. Slumber refused to visit his eyelids, and his night was passed in feverish contemplation of the chain of circumstances tending to prove the identity of the mysterious visitant to the Colosseum and the inhabitant of the grotto of Monte Cristo; and the more he thought, the firmer grew his opinion on the subject. Worn out at length, he fell asleep at daybreak and did not awake till late. Like a genuine Frenchman, Albert had employed his time in arranging for the evening's diversion. He had sent to engage a box at the Teatro Argentino; and Franz, having a number of letters to write, relinquished the carriage to Albert for the whole of the day. At five o'clock Albert returned; he had delivered his letters of introduction, had received invitations for all his evenings, and had seen Rome. A day had sufficed Albert for all that; and he had also had time enough to ascertain the name of the piece to be played that night at the Teatro Argentino, and also what performers appeared in it.

The opera of "Parisina" was announced for representation, and the principal actors were Coselli, Moriani, and La Spech. The young men had reason to consider themselves fortunate in having the opportunity of hearing one of the best works by the composer of "Lucia di Lammermoor," supported by three of the most renowned vocalists of Italy. Albert had never been able to endure the Italian theatres, which have orchestras from which it is impossible to see, and no balconies or open boxes; these defects pressed hard on a man who had his stall at the Bouffes, and his share in the omnibus-box at the opera. Nevertheless, Albert displayed his most dazzling and effective costume whenever he visited the theatres. It was wasted splendor, — for it must be confessed that one of the

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most worthy representatives of Parisian fashion had overrun Italy for four months without meeting with a single adventure.

Sometimes Albert would affect to make a joke of his want of success, but internally he was deeply mortified that he, Albert de Morcerf, one of the young men most sought after, should still have only his labor for his pains. And the thing was the more annoying because with the characteristic modesty of a Frenchman, Albert had quitted Paris with the full conviction that he had only to show himself in Italy to carry all before him, and that upon his return he should astonish the Parisian world with the recital of his numerous love affairs. Alas! none of those interesting adventures fell in his way. The lovely countesses — Genoese, Florentine, and Neapolitan — were all faithful, if not to their husbands, at least to their lovers; and Albert had gained the painful conviction that the women of Italy have at least this advantage over those of France, that they are faithful to their infidelity. I would not venture to deny that in Italy, as everywhere else, there are exceptions. Albert, besides being an elegant, well-looking young man, was also possessed of considerable talent and ability; moreover, he was a viscount, — a recently created one, certainly, but in the present day it is of no consequence whether one dates from 1399 or from 1815. But to crown all these advantages, Albert de Morcerf commanded an income of fifty thousand livres, a more than sufficient sum to render him a personage of considerable importance in Paris. It was therefore no small mortification to him not to have been seriously regarded by any one in any of the cities which he had visited. He hoped, however, to recover himself at Rome, — the Carnival being, in all the countries of the earth which celebrate that excellent institution, a period of liberty in which even

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the wisest and gravest throw off the usual rigidity of their lives, and suffer themselves to be drawn into acts of folly.

The Carnival was to commence on the morrow; therefore Albert had not an instant to lose in setting forth the programme of his hopes, expectations, and claims to notice. With this design he had engaged a box in the most conspicuous part of the theatre, and exerted himself to set off his personal attractions by the aid of an elaborate toilet. The box taken by Albert was in the first circle, which with us is the gallery. The first three tiers of boxes are equally aristocratic, and are called for that reason "the boxes of the nobility." The box engaged, which would contain a dozen persons easily, had cost the two friends a little less than a box for four would cost at the Ambigu. Albert had still another hope. If he could engage the affection of some fair Roman, that would lead naturally to a seat in a carriage, or a place in a princely balcony from which he might behold the gayeties of the Carnival. These united considerations made Albert more lively and anxious to please than he had hitherto been. Totally disregarding the business of the stage, he leaned from his box and began attentively scrutinizing the beauty of each pretty woman, aided by a powerful *lorgnette*. But alas! this attempt to attract similar notice wholly failed, — not even curiosity had been excited; and it was but too apparent that the lovely creatures into whose good graces he was desirous of stealing were all so much engrossed with themselves, their lovers, or their own thoughts, that they had not so much as remarked him or the pointing of his glass.

The truth was that the anticipated pleasures of the Carnival, with the "Holy Week" that was to succeed it, so filled every fair breast as to prevent the least attention

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being bestowed even on the business of the stage; the actors made their entries and exits unobserved or unthought of. At certain conventional moments the spectators would suddenly cease their conversation, or rouse themselves from their musings to listen to some brilliant effort of Moriani's, a well-executed recitative by Coselli, or to join in loud applause at the wonderful powers of La Spech; but that momentary excitement over, they quickly relapsed into their former state of preoccupation or interesting conversation. Towards the close of the first act the door of a box which had been hitherto vacant was opened; a lady entered to whom Franz had been introduced in Paris, where indeed he had imagined she still was. The quick eye of Albert caught the involuntary start with which his friend beheld the new arrival, and turning to him, he said hastily, "Do you know that woman?"

"Yes; what do you think of her?"

"She is supremely beautiful; what a complexion! And such magnificent hair! Is she French?"

"No; a Venetian."

"And her name is—"

"Comtesse G——."

"Ah! I know her by name," exclaimed Albert; "she is said to possess as much wit and cleverness as beauty! Ah! when I think that I might have been presented to her at the last ball of Madame de Villefort, where she was present, and neglected the opportunity,—what a ninny I was!"

"Shall I assist you in repairing your negligence?" asked Franz.

"My dear fellow, are you really on such good terms with her as to venture to take me to her box?"

"Why, I have had the honor of speaking to her

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three or four times in my life; but you know that even such an acquaintance as that might warrant my doing what you ask."

At this instant the countess perceived Franz and graciously waved her hand to him, to which he replied by a respectful inclination of the head.

"Upon my word," said Albert, "you seem to be on excellent terms with the beautiful countess!"

"You are mistaken in thinking so," returned Franz, calmly; "but you fall into the same error which leads so many of our countrymen to commit the most egregious blunders, — I mean that of judging the habits and customs of Italy and Spain by our Parisian notions. Believe me, nothing is more fallacious than to form an estimate of the degree of intimacy existing among persons by the familiar manner of their intercourse; there is a similarity of feeling at this instant between ourselves and the countess, — nothing more."

"Is there, indeed, my good fellow? Pray tell me, is it sympathy of heart?"

"No; of taste!" continued Franz, gravely.

"And what is the cause of it?"

"A visit to the Colosseum, like that which we made together."

"By moonlight?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Very nearly so."

"And you talked of —"

"The dead."

"Ah!" cried Albert, "that must have been exhilarating. Well, I promise you that if I have the good fortune to attend the beautiful countess on such a promenade, I shall talk to her of the living."

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"And you will make a mistake."

"In the mean time you will present me to her, as you have promised?"

"As soon as the curtain falls."

"The first act is devilishly long."

"Hear the end; it is very fine, and Coselli sings admirably."

"Yes; but what a figure!"

"La Spech, then; it is impossible to be more dramatic."

"But you must understand that when one has heard Sontag and Malibran —"

"At least you must admire Moriani's style and execution."

"I never fancied men of his dark, ponderous appearance singing with a voice like a woman's."

"My good friend," said Franz, turning to him, while Albert continued to point his glass at every box in the theatre, "you seem determined not to approve; you are really too difficult to please."

The curtain at length fell on the performances, to the infinite satisfaction of the Vicomte de Morcerf, who seized his hat, rapidly passed his fingers through his hair, arranged his cravat and wristbands, and signified to Franz that he was waiting for him to lead the way. Franz, who had mutely interrogated the countess and received from her a gracious smile in token that he would be welcome, did not delay the gratification of Albert's eager impatience, but began at once the tour of the house closely followed by Albert, who availed himself of the few minutes required to reach the opposite side of the theatre to adjust his collar and to arrange the lappets of his coat; this important task was just completed as they arrived at the countess's box. The young man who was seated

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beside the countess in the front of the *loge* instantly rose, in obedience to the Italian custom, and surrendered his place to the strangers, who, in turn, would be expected to retire upon the arrival of other visitors.

Franz presented Albert as one of the most distinguished young men of the day, both as regarded his position in society and extraordinary talents; nor did he say more than the truth, for in Paris and the circle in which the viscount moved, he was looked upon and cited as a model of perfection. Franz added that his companion, deeply grieved because he had not been presented to the countess during her sojourn in Paris, had requested him (Franz) to remedy that misfortune by conducting him to her box, and concluded by asking pardon for his presumption in doing so. The countess replied by a charming bow to Albert, and extended her hand with cordial kindness to Franz. Albert, being invited by her, took the vacant place by her side, and Franz sat in the second row behind her. Albert was soon deeply engrossed in discoursing upon Paris and Paris matters, speaking to the countess of the various persons they both knew there. Franz perceived how completely he was in his element, and unwilling to interfere with the pleasure he so evidently felt, took up Albert's *lorgnette*, and began in his turn to survey the audience. Sitting alone, in the front of a box immediately opposite, but situated in the third tier, was a woman of exquisite beauty, dressed in a Greek costume, which it was evident from the ease and grace with which she wore it was her national attire. Behind her, but in deep shadow, was the outline of a male figure; but the features of this latter personage it was not possible to distinguish. Franz could not forbear breaking in upon the apparently interesting conversation passing between the countess and Albert, to inquire of the former if she knew who was the

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fair Albanian opposite, since beauty such as hers was well worthy of being remarked by either sex.

"All I can tell you about her," replied the countess, "is that she has been at Rome since the beginning of the season, — for I saw her where she now sits the very first night of the theatre's opening; and since then she has never missed a performance. Sometimes she is accompanied by the individual who is with her, and at others merely attended by a black servant."

"And what do you think of her personal appearance?"

"Oh, I consider her perfectly lovely, — she is just my idea of what Medora must have been."

Franz and the countess exchanged a smile; and then the latter resumed her conversation with Albert, while Franz returned to his previous survey of the house and company. The curtain rose on the ballet, which was one of those excellent specimens of the Italian school, arranged and put on the stage by Henri, who has established for himself a great reputation throughout Italy for his taste and skill in the chorographic art, — one of those masterly productions of grace, method, and elegance in which the whole *corps de ballet*, from the principal dancers to the humblest supernumerary, are all engaged on the stage at the same time; and a hundred and fifty persons may be seen exhibiting the same attitude, or elevating the same arm or leg with a simultaneous movement. The ballet was called "Poliska." However much the ballet might have claimed his attention, Franz was too deeply occupied with the beautiful Greek to take any note of it, while she seemed to experience an almost childlike delight in watching it; her eager, animated looks contrasted strongly with the utter indifference of her companion, who during the whole time the piece lasted never even moved, spite of the furious crashing din produced by the trumpets, cymbals, and Chinese bells, made

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to produce their loudest sound from the orchestra. The apathetic companion of the fair Greek took no heed of the deafening sounds that prevailed, but was apparently enjoying soft repose and bright celestial dreams. The ballet at length came to a close; and the curtain fell amid the frenzied plaudits of an enthusiastic audience.

Owing to the very judicious plan of dividing the two acts of the opera with a ballet, the pauses between the performances are very short in Italy, — the singers in the opera having time to rest themselves and change their costume when necessary, while the dancers are executing their pirouettes and exhibiting their graceful steps. The overture to the second act began; and at the first sound of the leader's bow across his violin, Franz observed the sleeper slowly arise and approach the Greek girl, who turned round to say a few words to him, and then leaning forward again on the railing, became as absorbed as before in what was going on. The countenance of the person who had addressed her remained so completely in the shade that Franz could not distinguish his features. The curtain was raised, and the attention of Franz was attracted by the actors; his eyes wandered for a moment from the box containing the beautiful Greek to watch the scene on the stage.

Most of my readers are aware that the second act of "Parisina" opens with the celebrated and effective duet in which Parisina, while sleeping, betrays to Azzo the secret of her love for Ugo. The injured husband goes through all the workings of jealousy until conviction seizes on his mind; and then in a frenzy of rage and indignation, he awakens his guilty wife to tell her he knows her guilt, and to threaten her with his vengeance. This duet is one of the most beautiful, expressive, and terrible that have emanated from the fruitful pen of Doni-

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zetti. Franz now listened to it for the third time; and though he was not especially susceptible to the power of music, it produced upon him a profound effect. He rose with the audience and was about to join in the loud, enthusiastic applause that followed, but suddenly his purpose was arrested, his hands fell by his sides, and the half-uttered "bravos" expired on his lips. The occupant of the box in which the Greek girl sat appeared to share the universal admiration that prevailed, for he left his seat to stand up in the front; so that his countenance being fully revealed, Franz had no difficulty in recognizing him as the mysterious inhabitant of Monte Cristo, and the man whose voice and figure he had thought he recognized the preceding evening in the ruins of the Colosseum. All doubt of his identity was now at an end; the mysterious traveller evidently resided at Rome. The surprise and agitation occasioned by this full confirmation of Franz's former suspicion had no doubt imparted a corresponding expression to his features, — for the countess, after gazing with a puzzled look on his speaking countenance, burst into a fit of laughter, and begged to know what had happened.

"Madame the Countess," returned Franz, "I asked you a short time since if you knew any particulars respecting the Albanian lady opposite; I ask now if you know her husband?"

"Nay," answered the countess, "I know no more of him than of her."

"Perhaps you never before remarked him?"

"What a question, — so truly French! Do you not know that we Italians have eyes only for the man we love?"

"True," replied Franz.

"All I can say," continued the countess, taking up the

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lorgnette, and directing it to the box in question, "is that the gentleman seems to me as though he had just been dug up; he looks more like a corpse permitted by some friendly grave-digger to quit his tomb for a while and revisit this earth of ours than anything human. How ghastly pale he is!"

"Oh, he is always as colorless as you now see him," said Franz.

"Then you know him?" asked the countess. "Then I will inquire of you who he is."

"I fancy I have seen him before; and I even think he recognizes me."

"And I can well understand," said the countess, shrugging up her beautiful shoulders, as though an involuntary shudder passed through her veins, "that those who have once seen that man will never be likely to forget him."

The sensation experienced by Franz was evidently not peculiar to himself; another, and wholly uninterested person, felt the same unaccountable awe and misgiving. "Well," he inquired after the countess had a second time directed her *lorgnette* at the *loge* of their mysterious *vis-à-vis*, "what do you think of that man?"

"Why, that he is no other than Lord Ruthven himself in a living form."

This fresh allusion to Byron interested Franz. If any man could lead him to believe in the existence of vampires, it was the man before him.

"I must find out who and what he is," said Franz, rising from his seat.

"No, no!" cried the countess; "you must not leave me! I depend upon you to escort me home. Oh, indeed, I cannot permit you to go!"

"Is it possible," whispered Franz, "that you entertain any fear?"

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"I 'll tell you," answered the countess. "Byron swore to me that he believed in the existence of vampires, and even assured me that he had seen them. He described to me their appearance; it is precisely like his, — the coal black hair, large bright glittering eyes in which a wild, unearthly fire seems burning, that ghastly paleness. Then observe, too, that the very woman he has with him is altogether unlike all others of her sex. She is a foreigner — a Greek — a heretic — probably a magician like himself. I entreat of you not to go near him, — at least to-night. And if to-morrow your curiosity still continues as great, pursue your researches if you will; but now I mean to keep you."

Franz protested that he could not defer his pursuit till the following day for many reasons.

"Listen to me," said the countess; "I am going home. I have a party at my house to-night, and therefore cannot possibly remain till the conclusion of the opera. Will you be so discourteous as to refuse me your company?"

There was nothing left for Franz to do but to take up his hat, open the door of the *loge*, and offer the countess his arm. It was quite evident from the countess's manner that her uneasiness was not feigned; and Franz himself could not resist a species of superstitious dread, — the stronger in him, as it arose from a variety of corroborating recollections, while the terror of the countess sprang from an instinctive feeling. Franz could even feel her arm tremble as he assisted her into the carriage. He conducted her to her home. No company was there; and she was not expected. He reproached her about it.

"In very truth," she said, "I am not well, and I need to be alone; the sight of that man has completely upset me."

Franz began to laugh.

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"Do not laugh," she said; "you really do not feel like laughing. Now make me a promise."

"What is it?"

"Promise me."

"I will do anything you desire except relinquish my determination of finding out who this man is. I have more reasons than you can imagine for desiring to know who he is, whence he came, and whither he is going."

"Where he comes from I don't know; but I can tell you where he is going, — he is going to hell, without the least doubt."

"Let us return to the promise you wished me to make," said Franz.

"Well, then, you must give me your word to return immediately to your hotel, and make no attempt to follow this man to-night. There are certain affinities between the persons we quit and those we meet afterwards. For Heaven's sake, do not serve as a conductor between that man and me! Pursue him to-morrow as eagerly as you please; but never bring him near me if you would not see me die of terror. And now good-night; retire to your apartment and try to sleep away all recollections of this evening. For my own part, I am quite sure I shall not be able to close my eyes." So saying, the countess quitted Franz, leaving him unable to decide whether she was merely amusing herself at his expense or was disturbed by actual apprehensions.

Upon his return to the hotel, Franz found Albert in his dressing-gown and slippers, listlessly extended on a sofa, smoking a cigar. "My dear fellow!" cried he, springing up, "is it really you? Why, I did not expect to see you before to-morrow."

"My dear Albert!" replied Franz, "I am glad of this opportunity to tell you, once and forever, that you enter-

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tain a most erroneous notion concerning Italian women. I should have thought the continual failures you have met with in all your own love affairs might have taught you better by this time."

"Upon my soul! these women would puzzle the very Devil to read them aright. Why, here, — they give you their hand, they press yours in return, they keep up a whispering conversation, permit you to accompany them home! Why, if a Parisian were to do one quarter as much she would lose her reputation!"

"And the very reason why the women of this fine country put so little restraint on their words and actions is that they live so much in public, and have really nothing to conceal. Besides, you must have perceived that the countess was really alarmed."

"At what, — at the sight of that respectable gentleman sitting opposite to us with the lovely Greek? Now, for my part, I met them in the lobby after the conclusion of the piece; and hang me, if I can guess where you got your notions of the other world! He is a fine-looking fellow, well dressed, with the air of one who clothes himself in France, with Blin or with Humann, — a trifle pale, indeed, but you know that paleness is a mark of distinction."

Franz smiled, — for he well remembered that Albert particularly prided himself on the entire absence of color in his own complexion. "Well, that tends to confirm my own ideas," said he, "that the countess's suspicions were destitute alike of sense and reason. Did he speak in your hearing; and did you catch any of his words?"

"I did; but they were uttered in the Romaic dialect. I knew that from the mixture of broken Greek words. I must tell you, my boy, that when I was at college I was rather strong in Greek."

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"He spoke the Romaic language, did he?"

"I think so."

"That settles it," murmured Franz. "'T is he, past all doubt."

"What do you say?"

"Nothing, nothing! But tell me, what were you doing here?"

"Oh, I was arranging a little surprise."

"Indeed! Of what nature?"

"Why, you know it is quite impossible to procure a carriage."

"I should think so, when we have in vain made every possible endeavor."

"Well, I have had a marvellous idea."

Franz looked at Albert as though he had not much confidence in the suggestions of his imagination.

"My dear fellow," said Albert, "you honor me with a look which well deserves that I should demand satisfaction of you."

"And I promise to give you the satisfaction of a gentleman if your scheme turns out as ingenious as you say it is."

"Well, then, listen."

"I listen."

"You agree, do you not, that obtaining a carriage is out of the question?"

"I do."

"Neither can we procure horses?"

"True."

"But we might procure a cart?"

"Perhaps."

"And a pair of oxen?"

"Probably."

"Then you see, my good fellow, with a cart and a

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couple of oxen our business can be managed. The cart must be tastefully ornamented; and if you and I dress ourselves as Neapolitan reapers, we may get up a striking tableau, after the manner of that splendid picture by Léopold Robert. It would add greatly to the effect if the countess would join us in the costume of a peasant from Puzzoli or Sorrento. Our group would then be quite complete, more especially as the countess is quite beautiful enough to be taken for the original of 'The Mother of the Child.'"

"Well," said Franz, "this time, M. Albert, I am bound to give you credit for having hit upon a capital idea."

"And quite a national one, too," replied Albert, with gratified pride. "A mere mask borrowed from our own festivities. Ha, ha! Messieurs the Romans; you thought to make us unhappy strangers trot at the heels of your processions, like so many lazzaroni, because no carriages or horses are to be had in your beggarly city. Very well; we have invented them."

"And have you communicated your triumphant idea to any person?"

"Only to our host. Upon my return home I sent for him and explained to him my wishes. He assured me that nothing would be easier. I wanted him to have the horns of the oxen gilded, but he told me there would not be time, as it would require three days to effect that; so you see we must do without that little superfluity."

"And where is he now?"

"Who?"

"Our host."

"Gone out in search of our equipage; by to-morrow it might be too late."

"Then he will be able to give us an answer to-night?"

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"Oh, I expect him every minute."

At this instant the door opened, and the head of Maître Pastrini appeared. "*Permesso?*" inquired he.

"Certainly, certainly!" cried Franz.

"Now then," asked Albert, eagerly, "have you found the desired cart and oxen?"

"Better than that!" replied the Maître Pastrini, with the air of a man perfectly well satisfied with himself.

"Take care, my worthy host," said Albert; "*better* is a sure enemy to *well*."

"Let your Excellencies only leave the matter to me," returned Maître Pastrini, in a tone indicative of unbounded self-confidence.

"But what have you done?" asked Franz.

"Your Excellencies are aware," responded the landlord, swelling with importance, "that the Count of Monte Cristo is living on the same floor with yourselves!"

"I should think we did know it," exclaimed Albert, "since it is owing to that circumstance that we are packed into these small rooms like two poor students in the back streets of Paris."

"Well, then, the Count of Monte Cristo, hearing of the dilemma in which you are placed, has sent to offer you seats in his carriage and two places at his windows in the Palace Rospoli."

Albert and Franz looked at each other. "But do you think," asked Albert, "that we ought to accept such offers from a stranger?"

"What sort of person is this Count of Monte Cristo?" asked Franz of his host.

"A very great nobleman, but whether Maltese or Sicilian I cannot exactly say; but this I know, that he is noble as a Borghese and rich as a gold mine."

"It seems to me," said Franz, speaking in an undertone

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to Albert, "that if this man merited the high panegyrics of our landlord, he would have conveyed his invitation through another channel, and not permitted it to be brought to us in this unceremonious way. He would have written, or — "

At this instant some one knocked at the door. "Come in!" said Franz. A servant, wearing a livery of peculiar elegance, appeared at the threshold; and placing two cards in the landlord's hands, who forthwith presented them to the two young men, he said, "From M. le Comte de Monte Cristo to M. le Vicomte Albert de Morcerf and M. Franz Épinay. M. le Comte de Monte Cristo," continued the servant, "begs these gentlemen's permission to wait upon them as their neighbor to-morrow morning, and he desires to know at what time they will please to receive him."

"Faith, Franz," whispered Albert, "there is not much to find fault with here."

"Tell the count," replied Franz, "that we will do ourselves the pleasure of calling on him." The servant bowed and retired.

"That is what I call an elegant mode of attack," said Albert. "You were quite correct in what you stated, Maître Pastrini. The Count of Monte Cristo is unquestionably a man of good breeding."

"Then you accept his offer?" said the host.

"Of course we do," replied Albert. "Still, I must own I am sorry to be obliged to give up the cart and the group of reapers; it would have produced such an effect! And were it not for the windows at the Palace Rospoli, by way of recompense for the loss of our beautiful scheme, I don't know but what I should have held on by my original plan. What say you, Franz?"

"Oh, I agree with you; the windows in the Palace Rospoli alone decided me."

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The mention of two places in the Palace Rospoli had recalled to Franz's mind the conversation he had overheard the preceding evening in the ruins of the Colosseum between the mysterious unknown and the Transteverian, in which the stranger in the cloak had engaged himself to obtain the freedom of a condemned criminal. Now, if the man with the cloak was, as everything led Franz to believe, the same as the person he had just seen in the Teatro Argentino, he would clearly recognize him; and then nothing would prevent his satisfying his curiosity concerning him. Franz passed the night in dreaming of those two apparitions and longing for the morrow. The next day must clear up every doubt; and unless his host of Monte Cristo possessed the ring of Gyges, and by its power were able to render himself invisible, it was very certain he could not escape this time. Eight o'clock found Franz up and dressed, while Albert, who had not the same motives for early rising, was still profoundly asleep. The first act of Franz was to summon his landlord, who presented himself with his accustomed obsequiousness.

"Pray, Maître Pastrini," asked Franz, "is not some execution appointed to take place to-day?"

"Yes, your Excellency; but if your reason for inquiry is that you may procure a window, you are much too late."

"Oh, no!" answered Franz, "I had no such intention; and even if I had felt a wish to witness the spectacle, I might have done so from Monte Pincio, could I not?"

"Oh! I thought your Excellency would not wish to mingle with the rabble, to whom that hill is a sort of natural amphitheatre."

"Very possibly I may not go," answered Franz; "but give me some particulars."

"What particulars would your Excellency like to hear?"

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"Why, the number of persons condemned to suffer, their names, and description of the death they are to die."

"That happens well, your Excellency! Only a few minutes ago they brought me the *tavolettas.*"

"What are they?"

"Wooden tablets hung up at the corners of streets the evening before an execution, on which is pasted a paper containing the names of the condemned persons, their crimes, and mode of punishment. The purpose of this notification is to summon the faithful to pray that God will grant to the culprits a sincere repentance."

"And these tablets are brought to you that you may add your prayers to those of the faithful, are they?" asked Franz, somewhat incredulously.

"Oh, dear, no, your Excellency; I have an agreement with the man who pastes up the papers, and he brings them to me as he would the play-bills; so that in case any person staying at my hotel should like to witness an execution, he may obtain every requisite information in season."

"Upon my word, that is most delicate attention on your part, Maître Pastrini," cried Franz.

"Why, your Excellency," returned the landlord, smiling, "I think I may take upon myself to say that I neglect nothing to deserve the support and patronage of the noble visitors to this poor hotel."

"I see that plainly enough, my most excellent host, and you may rely upon my repeating so striking a proof of your attention to your guests wherever I go. Meanwhile, oblige me by a sight of one of these *tavolettas.*"

"Nothing can be easier than to comply with your Excellency's wish," said the landlord, opening the door of the chamber; "I have caused one to be placed on the landing, close by your apartments." Then, taking the

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tablet from the wall, he handed it to Franz, who read as follows:—

"The public is informed that on Wednesday, February 23, being the first day of the Carnival, two executions will take place in the Place del Popolo, by order of the Tribunal de la Rota, of two individuals, named Andrea Rondola, and Peppino, otherwise called Rocca Priori; the former found guilty of the murder of a venerable and exemplary priest, named Don César Torlini, canon of the church of St. Jean de Latran; and the latter convicted of being an accomplice of the atrocious and sanguinary bandit, Luigi Vampa, and his band. The first-named malefactor will be *mazzolato*, the second culprit *decapitato*. The prayers of all charitable souls are entreated for these unfortunate men, that it may please God to awaken them to a sense of their guilt, and to grant them a hearty and sincere repentance for their crimes."

This was precisely what Franz had heard the evening before in the ruins of the Colosseum. No part of the programme differed. The names of the condemned persons, their crimes, and mode of punishment, all agreed with his previous information. In all probability, therefore, the Transteverian was no other than the bandit Luigi Vampa himself, and the man shrouded in the mantle "Sinbad the Sailor," who no doubt was still pursuing his philanthropic undertakings in Rome as he had already done at Porto Vecchio and Tunis. Time was getting on, however; it was nine o'clock, and Franz was going to awaken Albert, when to his great astonishment he saw him come out of his chamber fully dressed. The anticipated delights of the Carnival had so run in Albert's head as to make him leave his pillow earlier than his friend had expected.

"Now, my excellent Maître Pastrini," said Franz, addressing his landlord, "since we are both ready, do

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you think we may proceed at once to visit the Count of Monte Cristo?"

"Most assuredly," replied he. "The Count of Monte Cristo is always an early riser; and I can answer for his having been up these two hours."

"Then you really think that we shall commit no impropriety if we pay our respects to him immediately?"

"Not the least."

"In that case, Albert, if you are ready —"

"Entirely ready," said Albert.

"Let us go and thank our neighbor for his courtesy."

"Come on."

The landlord preceded the friends across the landing, which was all that separated them from the apartments of the count, rang at the bell, and upon the door being opened by a servant, said, "*I Signori Francesi.*"

The domestic bowed respectfully and invited them to enter. They passed through two rooms furnished with a style and luxury they had not expected to find under the roof of Maître Pastrini, and were shown into an elegantly-fitted-up salon. The richest Turkey carpets covered the floor, and the softest and most inviting couches, *bergères*, and sofas offered their high-piled and yielding cushions to such as desired repose or refreshment. Splendid paintings by the first masters were ranged against the walls, intermingled with magnificent trophies of war, while heavy curtains of costly tapestry were suspended before the different doors of the room. "If your Excellencies will please to be seated," said the man, "I will let Monsieur the Count know that you are here."

And with these words he disappeared behind one of the tapestried *portières*. As the door opened the sound of a *guzla* reached the ears of the young men, but was almost immediately lost, for the rapid closing of the door merely

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allowed one rich swell of harmony to enter the salon. Franz and Albert looked inquiringly at each other, then at the gorgeous furniture of the apartment. All seemed even more splendid on a second view than it had at first.

"Well," said Franz to his friend, "what do you think of all this?"

"Why, upon my soul, my dear fellow, it strikes me our neighbor must either be some successful stock-jobber who has speculated in the fall of the Spanish funds, or some prince travelling *incognito*."

"Hush!" replied Franz, "that is what we shall soon discover, — for here he comes."

As Franz spoke, he heard the sound of a door turning on its hinges; and almost immediately afterwards the tapestry was drawn aside, and the owner of all these riches stood before the two young men. Albert instantly rose to meet him; but Franz remained spell-bound on his chair. He who entered was the mysterious visitant to the Colosseum, the occupant of the box at the theatre, and the mysterious host of Monte Cristo.

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CHAPTER V.

LA MAZZOLATA.

"GENTLEMEN," said the Count of Monte Cristo as he entered, "I pray you to excuse me for suffering my visit to be anticipated; but I feared to disturb you by presenting myself earlier at your apartments. Besides, you sent me word you would come to me; and I have held myself at your disposal."

"Franz and I have to thank you a thousand times, Monsieur the Count," returned Albert. "You extricated us from a great dilemma; and we were on the point of inventing some very fantastic vehicle when your friendly invitation reached us."

"Indeed!" returned the count, motioning the two young men to sit down. "It was the fault of that blockhead Pastrini that I did not sooner assist you in your distress. He did not mention your embarrassment to me, who, alone and isolated as I am, seek every opportunity of making the acquaintance of my neighbors. As soon as I learned I could in any way assist you, I eagerly seized the opportunity of offering my services."

The two young men bowed. Franz had as yet found nothing to say. He had formed no plan of action; and as nothing in the count's manner manifested the wish that he should recognize him, he did not know whether to make any allusion to the past, or to wait until he had more proof. Besides, although sure it was he who had

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been in the box the previous evening, he could not be equally positive that he was the man he had seen at the Colosseum. He resolved, therefore, to let things take their course without making any direct overture to the count. Besides, he had this advantage over him, — he was master of his secret, while he had no hold on Franz, who had nothing to conceal. However, he resolved to lead the conversation to a subject which might possibly clear up his doubts.

"Monsieur the Count," said he, "you have offered us places in your carriage, and at your windows of the Rospoli Palace. Can you tell us where we can obtain a sight of the Place del Popolo?"

"Ah!" said the count, negligently, looking attentively at Morcerf, "is there not something like an execution upon the Place del Popolo?"

"Yes," returned Franz, finding that the count was coming to the point he wished.

"Stay, I think I told my steward yesterday to attend to this; perhaps I can render you this slight service also." He extended his hand, and rang the bell thrice. "Did you ever occupy yourself," said he to Franz, "with the employment of time and the means of simplifying the summoning your servants? I have: when I ring once, it is for my valet; twice, for my *maître d'hôtel;* thrice, for my steward. Thus I do not waste a minute or a word. Here he is!"

A man from forty-five to fifty years old entered, who exactly resembled the smuggler who had introduced Franz into the cavern; but he did not appear to recognize him. It was evident he had his orders.

"M. Bertuccio," said the count, "have you procured me a window looking on the Place del Popolo, as I ordered you yesterday?"

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"Yes, Excellency," returned the steward; "but it was very late."

"Did I not tell you I wished for one?" replied the count, frowning.

"And your Excellency has one, which had been let to Prince Lobanieff; but I was obliged to pay a hundred—"

"That will do, — that will do, M. Bertuccio; spare these gentlemen all such domestic arrangements. You have the window; that is sufficient. Give orders to the coachman; and be in readiness on the stairs to conduct us to it." The steward bowed, and was about to quit the room. "Ah!" continued the count, "be good enough to ask Pastrini if he has received the *tavoletta*, and if he can send us an account of the execution."

"There is no need to do that," said Franz, taking out his tablets; "for I saw the account, and copied it down."

"Very well, you can retire, M. Bertuccio; let us know when breakfast is ready. These gentlemen," added he, turning to the two friends, "will, I trust, do me the honor to breakfast with me?"

"But, Monsieur the Count," said Albert, "we shall abuse your kindness."

"Not at all; on the contrary, you will give me great pleasure. You will, one or the other of you, perhaps both, return it to me at Paris. M. Bertuccio, lay covers for three." He took Franz's tablets out of his hand.

"'The public is informed,'" he read in the same tone with which he would have read a newspaper, "'that on Wednesday, February 23, being the first day of the Carnival, two executions will take place in the Place del Popolo, by order of the Tribunal de la Rota, of two individuals, named Andrea Rondola, and Peppino, otherwise called Rocca Priori; the former found guilty of the murder of a venerable and exemplary priest, named Don César Torlini, canon of the church of St. Jean

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de Latran; and the latter convicted of being an accomplice of the atrocious and sanguinary bandit, Luigi Vampa, and his band.' Hum! 'The first-named malefactor will be *mazzolato*, the second culprit *decapitato*.'

"Yes," continued the count, "it was at first arranged in this way; but I think since yesterday some change has taken place in the order of the ceremony."

"Really!" said Franz.

"Yes; I passed the evening at the Cardinal Rospigliosi's, and there mention was made of something like a pardon for one of the two men."

"For Andrea Rondolo?" asked Franz.

"No," replied the count, carelessly; "for the other [he glanced at the tablets as if to recall the name], for Peppino, called Rocca Priori. You are thus deprived of seeing a man guillotined; but the *mazzolato* still remains, which is a very curious punishment when seen for the first time, and even the second, while the other, as you must know, is very simple. The *mandaïa* never fails, never trembles, never strikes thirty times ineffectually, like the soldier who beheaded the Comte de Chalais, and to whose tender mercy Richelieu had doubtless recommended the sufferer. Ah!" added the count, in a contemptuous tone, "do not tell me of European punishments; they are in the infancy, or rather the old age, of cruelty."

"Really, Monsieur the Count," replied Franz, "one would think that you had studied the different tortures of all the nations of the world."

"There are, at least, few that I have not seen," said the count, coldly.

"And you took pleasure in beholding these dreadful spectacles?"

"My first sentiment was horror; the second indifference; the third curiosity"

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"Curiosity! that is a terrible word."

"Why so? In life, our greatest preoccupation is death. Is it not, then, curious to study the different ways by which the soul and body can part; and how, according to their different characters, temperaments, and even the different customs of their countries, individuals bear the transition from life to death, from existence to annihilation? As for myself, I can assure you of one thing, — the more men you see die, the easier it becomes to die; and in my opinion, death may be a torture, but it is not an expiation."

"I do not quite understand you," replied Franz; "pray explain your meaning, for you excite my curiosity to the highest pitch."

"Listen," said the count, and deep hatred mounted to his face as the blood would to the face of any other. "If a man had by unheard-of and excruciating tortures destroyed your father, your mother, your mistress, — in a word, one of those beings who when they are torn from you leave a desolation, a wound that never closes, in your breast, — do you consider sufficient the reparation that society gives you by causing the knife of the guillotine to pass between the base of the occiput and the trapezal muscles of the murderer, and by inflicting a few seconds' physical pain upon him who has caused you years of moral sufferings?"

"Yes, I know," said Franz, "that human justice is insufficient to console us. She can give blood in return for blood, — that is all; but you must demand from her only what it is in her power to grant."

"I will put another case to you," continued the count: "that where society, attacked by the death of a person, avenges death by death. But are there not a thousand tortures by which a man may be made to suffer without

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society taking the least cognizance of them, or offering him even the insufficient means of vengeance of which we have just spoken? Are there not crimes for which the impalement of the Turks, the augers of the Persians, the stake and the brand of the Iroquois Indians, would be inadequate punishment, and which nevertheless society, indifferent, leaves unpunished? Answer me, do not these crimes exist?"

"Yes," answered Franz; "and it is to punish them that duelling is tolerated."

"Ah, duelling!" cried the count, — "a pleasant manner, upon my soul, of arriving at your end when that end is vengeance! A man has carried off your mistress; a man has seduced your wife; a man has dishonored your daughter, — he has rendered the whole life of one who had the right to expect from Heaven that portion of happiness God has promised to every one of his creatures an existtence of misery and infamy; and you think you are avenged because you send a ball through the head, or pass a sword through the breast of that man who has planted madness in your brain and despair in your heart, — without considering that it is often he who comes off victorious from the strife, cleared in the eyes of the world, and in a manner absolved by God! No, no," continued the count; "had I to avenge myself, it is not thus I would take revenge."

"Then you disapprove of duelling; you would not fight a duel?" asked Albert, in his turn, astonished at this strange theory.

"Oh, yes!" replied the count; "understand me, I would fight a duel for a trifle, for an insult, for a blow; and the more readily because, thanks to my skill in all bodily exercises and the indifference to danger I have gradually acquired, I should be almost certain to kill my man. Oh,

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I would fight for such a cause; but in return for a slow, profound, eternal torture, I would give back the same, were it possible: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, as the Orientalists say, — our masters in everything; those favored creatures who have formed for themselves a life of dreams and a paradise of realities."

"But," said Franz to the count, "with this theory, which renders you at once judge and executioner of your own cause, it would be difficult to adopt a course in which you would always avoid falling under the power of the law. Hatred is blind; rage carries you away; and he who pours out vengeance runs the risk of tasting a bitter draught."

"Yes, if he be poor and inexperienced; not if he be rich and skilful. Besides, the worst that could happen to him would be the punishment of which we have already spoken, and which the philanthropic French Revolution has substituted for being torn to pieces by horses, or broken on the wheel. What matters this punishment, as long as he is avenged? On my word, I almost regret that in all probability this miserable Peppino will not be *decapitato*, as you might have had an opportunity then of seeing how short a time the punishment lasts, and whether it is worth even mentioning — but really this is a most singular conversation for the Carnival, gentlemen; how did it arise? Ah, I recollect! you asked for a place at my window. You shall have it; but let us first sit down to table, for here comes the servant to inform us that breakfast is ready." As he spoke, a servant opened one of the four doors of the salon, saying, "*Al suo commodo!*" The two young men rose and entered the breakfast-room.

During the meal, which was excellent, and admirably served, Franz looked repeatedly at Albert, in order to

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remark the impression which he doubted not had been made on him by the words of their entertainer; but whether with his usual carelessness he had paid but little attention to him; whether the explanation of the Count of Monte Cristo with regard to duelling had satisfied him; or whether the events which Franz knew of had redoubled for him alone the effect of the count's theories, — he remarked that his companion was not at all preoccupied, but on the contrary ate like a man who for the last four or five months had been condemned to partake of Italian cookery, — that is, the worst in the world. As for the count, he just touched the dishes; it seemed as if he fulfilled the duties of an entertainer by sitting down with his guests, and awaited their departure to be served with some strange or more delicate food. This brought back to Franz, in spite of himself, the recollection of the terror with which the count had inspired the Comtesse G ——, and her firm conviction that the man in the opposite box was a vampire. At the end of the breakfast Franz took out his watch.

"Well," said the count, "what are you doing?"

"You must excuse us, Monsieur the Count," returned Franz; "but we have still much to do."

"What may that be?"

"We have no disguises; and it is absolutely necessary to procure them."

"Do not concern yourself about that; we have, I think, a private room in the Place del Popolo. I will have whatever costumes you choose brought to us, and you can dress there."

"After the execution?" cried Franz.

"Before or after, as you please."

"Opposite the scaffold?"

"The scaffold forms part of the fête."

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"Monsieur the Count, I have reflected on the matter," said Franz. "I thank you for your courtesy, but I shall content myself with accepting a place in your carriage and at your window at the Rospoli Palace; and I leave you at liberty to dispose of my place at the Place del Popolo."

"But I warn you, you will lose a very curious sight," returned the count.

"You will relate it to me," replied Franz; "and the recital from your lips will make as great an impression on me as if I had witnessed it. I have more than once intended witnessing an execution, but I have never been able to make up my mind; and you, Albert?"

"I," replied the viscount, — "I saw Castaing executed; but I think I was rather intoxicated that day, for I had quitted college the same morning, and we had passed the previous night at a tavern."

"Besides, the fact that you have not done a thing in Paris is no reason for your not doing it abroad; when you travel, it is to see everything. Think what a figure you will make when you are asked, 'How do they execute at Rome?' and you reply, 'I do not know'! And they say that the culprit is an infamous scoundrel, who killed with a log of wood a worthy canon who had brought him up like his own son. The devil! when a churchman is killed, it should be with a different weapon than a log, especially when he has behaved like a father. If you went to Spain, would you not see the bull-fights? Well, suppose it is a bull-fight that we are going to see. Recollect the ancient Romans of the Circus, and the sports where they killed three hundred lions and a hundred men. Think of the eighty thousand applauding spectators, the sage matrons who took their daughters, and the charming Vestals who made with the thumb of their white hands the fatal sign that said, 'Come, no idling! kill me that man, already nearly dead.'"

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"Shall you go, then, Albert?" asked Franz.

"*Ma foi!* yes. Like you, I hesitated, but the count's eloquence decides me!"

"Let us go, then," said Franz, "since you wish it; but on our way to the Place del Popolo, I wish to pass through the Rue du Cours. Is this possible, Monsieur the Count?"

"On foot, yes; in a carriage, no!"

"I will go on foot, then!"

"Is it important that you should pass through this street?"

"Yes, there is something I wish to see."

"Well, we will pass by the Rue du Cours. We will send the carriage to wait for us on the Place del Popolo, by the Strada del Babuino, for I shall be glad to pass, myself, through the Rue du Cours, to see if some orders I have given have been executed."

"Excellency," said a servant, opening the door, "a man in the dress of a penitent wishes to speak to you."

"Ah, yes!" returned the count; "I know who he is, gentlemen. Will you return to the salon? You will find on the centre-table some excellent Havana cigars. I will be with you directly."

The young men rose and returned into the salon, while the count, again apologizing, left by another door. Albert who was a great smoker, and who had considered it no small sacrifice to be deprived of the cigars of the Café de Paris, approached the table, and uttered a cry of joy at perceiving some veritable *puros*.

"Well," asked Franz, "what do you think of the Count of Monte Cristo?"

"What do I think?" said Albert, evidently surprised at such a question from his companion. "I think that he is a delightful fellow, who does the honors of his table admirably; who has travelled much, read much, is, like

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Brutus, of the Stoic school; and moreover," added he, sending a volume of smoke up towards the ceiling, "that he has excellent cigars."

Such was Albert's opinion of the count; and as Franz well knew that Albert professed never to form an opinion except upon long reflection, he made no attempt to change it. "But," said he, "did you remark one very singular thing?"

"What?"

"How attentively he looked at you."

"At me?"

"Yes."

Albert reflected. "Ah!" replied he, sighing, "that is not very surprising. I have been more than a year absent from Paris, and my clothes are of a most antiquated cut; the count takes me for a provincial. The first opportunity you have, undeceive him, I beg, and tell him I am nothing of the kind."

Franz smiled; an instant after, the count entered. "I am now quite at your service, gentlemen," said he. "The carriage is going one way to the Place del Popolo, and we will go another; and if you please, by the Rue du Cours. Take some of these cigars, M. de Morcerf."

"With all my heart," returned Albert; "these Italian cigars are horrible. When you come to Paris, I will return all this."

"I will not refuse. I intend going there soon; and since you allow me, I will pay you a visit. Come; we have not any time to lose, it is half-past twelve, — let us set off!"

All three descended; the coachman received his master's orders, and drove down the Via del Babuino, while the three gentlemen walked towards the Place d'Espagne and the Via Frattina, which led directly between the Fiano

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and Rospoli Palaces. All Franz's attention was directed towards the windows of the palace last named, for he had not forgotten the signal agreed upon between the man in the mantle and the Transteverian peasant. "Which are your windows?" asked he of the count, with as much indifference as he could assume.

"The last three," returned he, with a negligence evidently unaffected, — for he could not imagine with what intention the question was put. Franz glanced rapidly towards the three windows. The side windows were hung with yellow damask, and the centre one with white damask and a red cross. The man in the mantle had kept his promise to the Transteverian, and there could now be no doubt that he was the count. The three windows were still untenanted. Preparations were making on every side; chairs were placed, scaffolds were raised, and windows were hung with flags. The masks could not appear; the carriages could not move about until the striking of the clock; but the masks were visible behind the windows, the carriages behind all the gates.

Franz, Albert, and the count continued to descend the Rue du Cours. As they approached the Place del Popolo the crowd became more dense, and above the heads of the multitude two objects were visible, — the obelisk, surmounted by a cross, which marks the centre of the place; and before the obelisk at the point where the three streets, del Babuino, del Corso, and di Ripetta meet, the two uprights of the scaffold, between which glittered the curved knife of the *mandaïa*. At the corner of the street they met the count's steward, who was awaiting his master. The window, hired doubtless at an exorbitant price, which the count had wished to conceal from his guests, was on the second floor of the great palace, situated between the Rue del Babuino and the Monte Pincio. It belonged,

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as we have said, to a small dressing-room, opening into a bedroom; and when the door of communication was shut, the inmates were quite alone. On the chairs were laid elegant costumes of *paillasse*, in blue and white satin.

"As you left the choice of your costumes to me," said the count to the two friends, "I have had these brought, as they will be the most worn this year; and they are most suitable, on account of the *confetti*, as they do not show the flour."

Franz heard the words of the count but imperfectly, and he perhaps did not fully appreciate this new attention, for he was wholly absorbed by the spectacle that the Place del Popolo presented, and by the terrible instrument which at that moment was its principal ornament. It was the first time Franz had ever seen a guillotine, — we say guillotine because the Roman *mandaïa* is formed on almost the same model as the French instrument; the knife, which is shaped like a crescent, that cuts with the convex side, falls from a less height, and that is all the difference. Two men, seated on the movable plank on which the culprit is laid, were eating their breakfast while waiting for the criminal. Their repast consisted apparently of bread and sausages. One of them lifted the plank, took thence a flask of wine, drank some and then passed it to his companion. These two men were the executioner's assistants. At this sight Franz felt the perspiration start forth upon his brow.

The prisoners, transported the previous evening from the Carceri Nuovo to the little church of Santa Maria del Popolo, had passed the night, each accompanied by two priests, in a chapel closed by a grating before which were two sentinels, relieved at intervals. A double line of carbineers, placed on each side of the door of the church, reached to the scaffold and formed a circle round it, leav-

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ing a path about ten feet wide, and around the guillotine a space of nearly a hundred feet. All the rest of the place was paved with heads of men and women. Many women held their infants on their shoulders, and thus the children had the best view. The Monte Pincio seemed a vast amphitheatre filled with spectators. The balconies of the two churches at the corner of the Rue del Babuino and the Rue di Ripetta were crammed; the steps even seemed a parti-colored sea, that was impelled towards the portico; every niche in the wall held its living statue. What the count said was true, — the most curious spectacle in life is that of death.

And yet, instead of the silence which the solemnity of the spectacle would seem to demand, a great noise arose from that crowd, — a noise composed of laughter and joyous shouts; it was evident that this execution was in the eyes of the people only the commencement of the Carnival. Suddenly the tumult ceased as if by magic; the doors of the church opened. A brotherhood of penitents clothed from head to foot in robes of gray sackcloth, with holes for the eyes alone, and holding in their hands lighted tapers, appeared first; the chief marched at the head. Behind the penitents came a man of lofty stature. He was naked, with the exception of cloth drawers, at the left side of which hung a large knife in a sheath, and he bore on his right shoulder a heavy mace. This man was the executioner. He had, moreover, sandals bound on his feet by cords. Behind the executioner came, in the order in which they were to die, first Peppino, and then Andrea. Each was accompanied by two priests. Neither had his eyes bandaged. Peppino walked with a firm step, doubtless aware of what awaited him. Andrea was supported by two priests. Each of them kissed from time to time the crucifix a confessor held out to them. At this sight

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alone Franz felt his legs tremble under him. He looked at Albert; he was white as his shirt, and mechanically cast away his cigar, although he had not half smoked it. The count alone seemed unmoved, — nay, more, a slight color seemed striving to rise in his pale cheeks. His nostril dilated like that of a wild beast that scents its prey; and his lips, half-opened, disclosed his white teeth, small and sharp like those of a jackal. And yet his features wore an expression of smiling tenderness, such as Franz had never before witnessed in them; his black eyes especially were full of kindness and pity. However, the two culprits advanced, and as they approached, their faces became visible. Peppino was a handsome young man, twenty-four or twenty-five years old, bronzed by the sun; he carried his head erect, and seemed to sniff the air to ascertain on which side his liberator would appear. Andrea was short and fat; his visage, marked with brutal cruelty, did not indicate age; he might be thirty. In prison he had suffered his beard to grow; his head fell on his shoulder, his legs bent beneath him, and he seemed to obey a mechanical movement of which he was unconscious.

"I thought," said Franz to the count, "that you told me there would be but one execution."

"I told you the truth," replied he, coldly.

"However, here are two culprits."

"Yes; but only one of these two is about to die. The other has long years to live."

"If the pardon is to come, there is no time to lose."

"And see, here it comes!" said the count.

At the moment when Peppino arrived at the foot of the *mandaïa*, a penitent, who seemed to arrive late, forced his way through the soldiers, and advancing to the chief of the brotherhood, gave him a folded paper. The piercing eye of Peppino had noticed all. The chief took the paper,

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unfolded it, and raising his hand, "Heaven be praised! and his Holiness also!" said he, in a loud voice. "Here is a pardon for one of the prisoners!"

"A pardon!" cried the people, with one voice, — "a pardon!"

At this cry Andrea raised his head. "Pardon for whom?" cried he. Peppino remained breathless.

"A pardon for Peppino, called Rocca Priori," said the principal friar; and he passed the paper to the officer commanding the carbineers, who read and returned it to him.

"For Peppino!" cried Andrea, who seemed aroused from the torpor in which he had been plunged. "Why for him and not for me? We ought to die together. I was promised he should die with me. You have no right to put me to death alone. I will not die alone! I will not!" And he broke from the priests, struggling and raving like a wild beast, and striving desperately to break the cords that bound his hands. The executioner made a sign, and his assistants leaped from the scaffold and seized him.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Franz of the count, for as all had been spoken in the Roman dialect, he had not perfectly comprehended it.

"Do you not see?" returned the count. "This human creature who is about to die is furious that his fellow-sufferer does not perish with him; and were he able, he would rather tear him to pieces with his teeth and nails than let him enjoy the life he himself is about to be deprived of. Oh, man, man! race of crocodiles!" cried the count, extending his clinched hands towards the crowd, "I recognize you well in that. At all times you are worthy of yourselves!"

All this time Andrea and the two executioners were

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struggling on the ground; and he kept exclaiming, "He ought to die! he shall die! I will not die alone!"

"Look, look!" cried the count, seizing the young men's hands, — "look! for on my soul, it is curious. Here is a man who had resigned himself to his fate, who was going to the scaffold to die, — like a coward, it is true, but he was about to die without resistance. Do you know what gave him strength; do you know what consoled him? It was that another partook of his punishment; that another partook of his anguish; that another was to die before him! Lead two sheep to the butcher's, two oxen to the slaughter-house, and make one of them understand his companion will not die, — the sheep will bleat for pleasure, the ox will bellow with joy. But man, — man, whom God created in his own image; man, upon whom God has laid his first, his supreme commandment, to love his neighbor; man, to whom God has given a voice to express his thoughts, — what is his first cry when he hears his fellow-man is saved? A blasphemy! Honor to man, this masterpiece of nature, this king of the creation!" And the count burst into a laugh, but a terrible laugh, that showed he must have suffered horribly.

In the mean time the struggle continued, and it was dreadful to witness. The people all took part against Andrea, and twenty thousand voices cried, "Kill him! Kill him!" Franz sprang back; but the count seized his arm and held him before the window. "What are you doing?" said he. "Do you pity him? If you heard the cry of 'Mad dog!' you would take your gun, you would unhesitatingly shoot the poor beast, who after all would be guilty only of having been bitten by another dog. And yet you pity a man who, without being bitten by one of his race, has yet murdered his benefactor; and who, now unable to kill any one because his hands are

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bound, wishes to see his companion in captivity perish. No, no; look, look!"

This recommendation was needless. Franz was fascinated by the horrible spectacle. The two assistants had borne Andrea to the scaffold, and there, in spite of his struggles, his bites, and his cries, had forced him to his knees. Meanwhile the executioner had put himself in position by his side, and lifting his mace, he signed to them to get out of the way; the criminal strove to rise, but ere he had time, the mace fell on his left temple. A dull and heavy sound was heard, and the man dropped like an ox, with his face to the ground, and then turned over on his back. The executioner let fall his mace, drew his knife, and with one stroke opened his throat, and mounting on his stomach, stamped violently on it with his feet. At every stroke a jet of blood sprang from the wound.

Franz could sustain himself no longer, but sank half-fainting into a seat. Albert, with his eyes closed, was standing grasping the window-curtains. The count was erect and triumphant, like the avenging angel.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE CARNIVAL AT ROME.

WHEN Franz recovered his senses, he saw Albert drinking a glass of water, of which his paleness showed he stood in great need, and the count assuming his costume of *pailasse*. He glanced mechanically towards the place. All had disappeared, — scaffold, executioners, victims; nought remained but the people, full of noise and excitement. The bell of Monte Citorio, which sounds only on the pope's decease and the opening of the Carnival, was ringing a joyous peal. "Well," asked he of the count, "what has then happened?"

"Nothing," replied the count; "only, as you see, the Carnival has commenced. Make haste and dress yourself."

"In reality," said Franz, "this horrible scene has passed away like a dream."

"It is indeed nothing but a dream, — a nightmare that has disturbed you."

"Yes, as to myself; but the culprit?"

"That is a dream also. Only he has remained asleep, while you have awakened; and who knows which of you is the most fortunate?"

"But Peppino, — what has become of him?"

"Peppino is a lad of sense who unlike most men, who are furious if they pass unnoticed, was delighted to see that the general attention was directed towards his companion. He profited by this distraction to slip away

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The Carnival at Rome.

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among the crowd, without even thanking the worthy priests who had accompanied him. Decidedly, man is an ungrateful and egotistical animal. But dress yourself; see, M. de Morcerf sets you the example."

Albert was in fact drawing on the satin trousers over his black trousers and varnished boots. "Well, Albert," said Franz, "do you feel much inclined to join the revels? Come; answer frankly."

"*Ma foi!* no," returned Albert. "But I am really glad to have seen such a sight; and I understand what Monsieur the Count said, — that when you have once habituated yourself to such a spectacle, it is the only one that causes you any emotion."

"Without reflecting that it is the only moment in which you can study characters," said the count. "On the steps of the scaffold death tears off the mask that has been worn through life, and the real visage is disclosed. It must be allowed Andrea was not very handsome, — the hideous scoundrel! Come, dress yourselves, gentlemen; dress yourselves!"

Franz felt that it would be ridiculous not to follow his two companions' example. He assumed his costume and fastened on his mask, which certainly was not paler than his own face. Their toilet finished, they descended; the carriage awaited them at the door, filled with *confetti* and bouquets. They fell into the line of carriages. It is difficult to form an idea of the perfect change that had taken place. Instead of the spectacle of gloomy and silent death, the Place del Popolo presented a spectacle of gay and noisy revelry. A crowd of masks flowed in from all sides, escaping from the doors, descending from the windows. From every street and every turn drove carriages filled with *pierrots*, harlequins, dominos, marchionesses, Transteverians, knights, and peasants, screaming, fighting,

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gesticulating, whirling eggs filled with flour, *confetti*, bouquets, attacking with their sarcasms and missiles friends and foes, companions and strangers, indiscriminately, without any one taking offence, or doing anything else than laugh.

Franz and Albert were like men who to drive away a violent sorrow have recourse to wine, and who, as they drink and become intoxicated, feel a thick veil drawn between the past and the present. They saw always, or rather they continued to perceive within themselves the reflection of what they had witnessed; but little by little the general excitement gained upon them, and they felt themselves obliged to take part in the noise and confusion. A handful of *confetti* that came from a neighboring carriage, and which, while it covered Morcerf and his two companions with dust, pricked his neck and that portion of his face uncovered by his mask like a hundred pins, plunged him into the general combat, in which all the masks around him were engaged. He rose in his turn, and seizing handfuls of *confetti*, with which the carriage was filled, cast them at his neighbors with all the force and address he was master of. The strife had fairly commenced; and the recollection of what they had seen half an hour before was gradually effaced from the young men's minds, so much were they occupied by the gay and glittering procession they now beheld. As for the Count of Monte Cristo, he had never for an instant shown any appearance of having been moved.

Imagine the large and splendid Rue du Cours bordered from one end to the other with lofty palaces, with their balconies hung with carpets, and their windows with flags; at these balconies and windows three hundred thousand spectators, — Romans, Italians, strangers from all parts of the world; the united aristocracy of birth,

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wealth, and genius; lovely women who, yielding to the influence of the scene, bend over their balconies or lean from their windows and shower down upon the passing carriages *confetti*, which are returned by bouquets; the air seems darkened with falling *confetti* and ascending flowers; in the streets the lively crowd, dressed in the most fantastic costumes, — gigantic cabbages walk gravely about, buffaloes' heads bellow from men's shoulders, dogs walk on their hind legs; in the midst of all this a mask is lifted, and as in Callot's "Temptation of Saint Anthony," a lovely face is exhibited which we would fain follow, but from which we are separated by troops of fiends, — this will give a faint idea of the Carnival at Rome.

At the second turn the count stopped the carriage and asked of his companions permission to quit them, leaving the vehicle at their disposal. Franz looked up; they were opposite the Rospoli Palace. At the centre window, the one hung with white damask with a red cross, was a blue domino, beneath which Franz's imagination easily pictured the beautiful Greek of the theatre.

"Gentlemen," said the count, springing out, "when you are tired of being actors, and wish to become spectators of this scene, you know you have places at my windows. In the mean time, dispose of my coachman, my carriage, and my servants."

We have forgotten to mention that the count's coachman was attired in a bear-skin exactly resembling Odry's in "The Bear and the Pacha;" and the two footmen behind were dressed up as green monkeys, with spring masks with which they made grimaces at every one who passed.

Franz thanked the count for his attention. As for Albert, he was busily occupied throwing bouquets at a carriage full of Roman peasants that had halted near him. Unfortunately for him, the line of carriages moved on

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again, and while he descended towards the Place del Popolo, the other ascended towards the Palais de Venise. "Ah! my dear fellow!" said he to Franz; "you did not see?"

"What?"

"There, — that *calèche* filled with Roman peasants."

"No."

"Well, I am convinced they are charming women."

"How unfortunate you were masked, Albert!" said Franz; "here was an opportunity of making up for past disappointments."

"Oh!" replied he, half laughing, half serious; "I hope the Carnival will not pass without bringing me some compensation."

But in spite of Albert's hope, the day passed unmarked by any incident, excepting meeting two or three times the *calèche* with the Roman peasants. At one of these encounters, accidentally or by Albert's intention, his mask fell off. He instantly rose and cast the remainder of the bouquets into the carriage. Doubtless one of the charming women Albert had divined beneath their coquettish disguise was touched by his gallantry, — for in her turn, as the carriage of the two friends passed her, she threw a bunch of violets into it. Albert seized it; and as Franz had no reason to suppose it was sent to him, he suffered Albert to retain it. Albert placed it in his button-hole, and the carriage went triumphantly on.

"Well," said Franz to him, "here is the commencement of an adventure."

"Laugh if you please; I really think so. So I will not abandon this bouquet."

"*Pardieu!*" returned Franz, laughing, "I believe you; it is a sign of recognition."

The jest, however, soon appeared to become earnest, — for when Albert and Franz again encountered the carriage

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with the *contadini*, the one who had thrown the violets to Albert clapped her hands when she beheld them in his button-hole.

"Bravo! bravo!" said Franz; "things go wonderfully. Shall I leave you? Perhaps you would prefer being alone?"

"No," replied he; "I will not be caught like a fool at a first demonstration, by a rendezvous under the clock, as they say at the opera-balls. If the fair peasant wishes to carry matters any farther, we shall find her, or rather she will find us to-morrow; then she will give me some sign, and I shall know what I have to do."

"On my word," said Franz, "you are wise as Nestor and prudent as Ulysses; and your fair Circe must be very skilful or very powerful if she succeed in changing you into a beast of any kind."

Albert was right; the fair unknown had resolved, doubtless, to carry the intrigue no farther on that day; for although the young men made several more turns, they did not again see the *calèche*, which had turned up one of the neighboring streets. Then they returned to the Rospoli Palace; but the count and the blue domino had also disappeared. The two windows, hung with yellow damask, were still occupied by persons whom probably the count had invited. At this moment the same bell that had proclaimed the opening of the Carnival sounded the retreat. The file on the Corso broke the line, and in a second all the carriages had disappeared. Franz and Albert were opposite the Via delle Maratte; the coachman, without saying a word, drove up it, passed along the Place d'Espagne and the Rospoli Palace and stopped at the door of the hotel. Maître Pastrini came to the door to receive his guests. Franz's first care was to inquire after the count, and to express his regret that he had not returned in time to take him; but Pastrini

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reassured him by saying that the Count of Monte Cristo had ordered a second carriage for himself, and that it had gone at four o'clock to fetch him from the Rospoli Palace. The count had moreover charged him to offer the two friends the key of his box at the Argentina. Franz questioned Albert as to his intentions; but Albert had great projects to put into execution before going to the theatre, and instead of making any answer, he inquired if Maître Pastrini could procure him a tailor.

"A tailor!" said the host; "and for what?"

"To make us between now and to-morrow two costumes of Roman peasants," returned Albert.

The host shook his head. "To make you two costumes between now and to-morrow? I ask your Excellencies' pardon, but this is a demand quite French; for the next week you will not find a single tailor who would consent to sew six buttons on a waistcoat if you paid him a crown for each button."

"Then I must give up the idea?"

"No; we have them ready-made. Leave all to me; and to-morrow, when you wake, you shall find a collection of costumes with which you will be satisfied."

"My dear Albert," said Franz, "leave all to our host; he has already proved himself full of resources. Let us dine quietly, and afterwards go and see the 'Italienne à Alger.'"

"Agreed," returned Albert; "but recollect, Maître Pastrini, that both my friend and myself attach the greatest importance to having to-morrow the costumes we have asked for."

The host again assured them they might rely on him, and that their wishes should be attended to; upon which Franz and Albert mounted to their apartments, and proceeded to disencumber themselves of their costumes.

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Albert, as he took off his dress, carefully preserved the bunch of violets; it was his sign of recognition for the morrow. The two friends sat down to table. Albert could not refrain from remarking the difference between the table of the Count of Monte Cristo and that of Maître Pastrini; and Franz, notwithstanding the dislike he seemed to have taken to the count, was obliged to confess that the advantage was not on Pastrini's side. During dessert the servant inquired at what time they wished for the carriage. Albert and Franz looked at each other, fearing indeed to abuse the count's kindness. The servant understood them. "His Excellency the Count of Monte Cristo," he said, "has given positive orders that the carriage shall remain at their Lordships' orders all the day; and their Lordships therefore can use it without fear of indiscretion."

They resolved to profit by the count's courtesy, and ordered the horses to be harnessed, while they substituted an evening costume for that which they had on, and which was somewhat the worse for the numerous combats they had sustained. This precaution taken, they went to the theatre, and installed themselves in the count's box. During the first act the Comtesse G—— entered hers. Her first look was at the *loge* where she had seen the count the previous evening, so that she perceived Franz and Albert in the box of the very person concerning whom she had expressed so strange an opinion to Franz. Her opera-glass was so fixedly directed towards them that Franz saw it would be cruel not to satisfy her curiosity; and availing himself of one of the privileges of the spectators of the Italian theatres, which consists in using their boxes as reception-rooms, the two friends quitted their box to pay their respects to the countess. Scarcely had they entered the *loge* when she motioned to Franz to assume the seat of honor. Albert in his turn sat behind.

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"Well," said she, hardly giving Franz time to sit down, "it seems you have nothing better to do than to make the acquaintance of this new Lord Ruthven; and here you are, the best friends in the world."

"Without being so far advanced as that, Madame the Countess," returned Franz, "I cannot deny that we have abused his good-nature all day."

"All day?"

"Yes; this morning we breakfasted with him; we rode in his carriage all day, and now we have taken possession of his box."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, and no."

"How so?"

"It is a long story."

"Relate it to me."

"It would frighten you too much."

"Another reason."

"At least wait until the story has a conclusion."

"Very well. I prefer complete histories; but tell me how you made his acquaintance? Did any one introduce you to him?"

"No; it was he who introduced himself to us."

"When?"

"Last night, after we left you."

"Through what medium?"

"The very prosaic one of our landlord."

"He is staying, then, at the Hôtel des Londres with you?"

"Not only in the same hotel, but on the same floor."

"What is his name, — for of course you know?"

"The Count of Monte Cristo."

"What kind of a name is that? it is not a family name."

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"No, it is the name of an island he has purchased."

"And he is a count?"

"A Tuscan count."

"Well, we must put up with that," said the countess, who was herself of one of the oldest families of Venice. "What sort of a man is he?"

"Ask the Vicomte de Morcerf."

"You hear, M. de Morcerf; I am referred to you," said the countess.

"We should be very hard to please, Madame," returned Albert, "did we not think him delightful; a friend of ten years' standing could not have done more for us, — and that with a grace, a delicacy, a courtesy which indicate clearly a man of society."

"Come," observed the countess, smiling, "I see that my vampire is only some millionnaire, who has taken the appearance of Lara in order to avoid being confounded with M. de Rothschild. And you have seen her?"

"Her?"

"The beautiful Greek of yesterday."

"No; we heard, I think, the sound of her *guzla*, but she remained invisible."

"When you say invisible," interrupted Albert, "it is only to keep up the mystery; for whom do you take the blue domino at the window with the white curtains?"

"Where was this window with white hangings?" said the countess.

"At the Rospoli Palace."

"The count had three windows at the Rospoli Palace?"

"Yes. Did you pass through the Rue du Cours?"

"Yes."

"Well, did you remark two windows hung with yellow damask, and one with white damask with a red cross? Those were the count's windows."

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"Why, he must be a nabob! Do you know what those three windows were worth?"

"Two or three hundred Roman crowns?"

"Two or three thousand!"

"The devil!"

"Does his island produce him such a revenue?"

"It does not bring him a penny."

"Then why did he purchase it?"

"For a whim."

"He is an original, then?"

"In fact," observed Albert, "he seemed to me somewhat eccentric; were he at Paris, and a frequenter of the theatres, I should say that he was a malicious joker playing a part, or that he was a poor devil whom literature had ruined, — in fact, this morning he made two or three exits worthy of Didier or Anthony."

At this moment a new visitor entered, and according to custom, Franz gave up his seat to him. This circumstance had moreover the effect of changing the conversation; an hour afterwards the two friends returned to their hotel. Maître Pastrini had already set about procuring their disguises for the morrow; and he assured them they would be perfectly satisfied.

The next morning, at nine o'clock, the host entered Franz's room, followed by a tailor, who had eight or ten costumes of Roman peasants on his arm; they selected two exactly alike, and charged the tailor to sew on each of their hats about twenty yards of ribbon, and to procure them two of those long silken sashes of different colors with which the lower orders decorate themselves on fête days. Albert was impatient to see how he looked in his new costume; it was a jacket and breeches of blue velvet, silk stockings with clocks, shoes with buckles, and a silk waistcoat. This picturesque attire set him off to great ad-

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vantage; and when he had bound the scarf around his waist, and his hat, placed coquettishly on one side, let fall on his shoulder a stream of ribbons, Franz was forced to confess that costume has much to do with the physical superiority we accord to certain nations. The Turks, who used to be so picturesque with their long and flowing robes, — are they not now hideous with their blue frocks buttoned up to the chin, and their red caps, which make them look like a bottle of wine with a red seal? Franz complimented Albert, who looked at himself in the glass with an unequivocal smile of satisfaction. They were thus engaged when the Count of Monte Cristo entered.

"Gentlemen," said he, "although a companion is agreeable, perfect freedom is sometimes still more agreeable. I come to say that to-day and during the remainder of the Carnival, I leave the carriage entirely at your disposal. The host will tell you that I have three or four more, so that you do not deprive me in taking it. Employ it, I pray you, for your pleasure or your business."

The young men wished to decline, but they could find no good reason for refusing an offer which was so agreeable to them. The Count of Monte Cristo remained a quarter of an hour with them, conversing on all subjects with the greatest ease. He was, as we have already said, well acquainted with the literature of all countries. A glance at the walls of his salon proved to Franz and Albert that he was a lover of pictures. A few words he let fall showed them he was no stranger to the sciences, and he seemed especially interested in chemistry. The two friends did not venture to return to the count the breakfast he had given them; it would have been too absurd to offer him in exchange for his excellent table the very inferior one of Maitre Pastrini. They told him so frankly, and he received their excuses with the air of a

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man who appreciated their delicacy. Albert was charmed with the count's manners, and he was only prevented from recognizing him for a veritable gentleman by his scientific knowledge. The permission to do what he liked with the carriage pleased him above all, — for the fair peasants had appeared in a very elegant carriage the preceding evening, and Albert was not sorry to be upon an equal footing with them. At half-past one they descended ; the coachman and footman had put on their livery over their disguises, which gave them a more ridiculous appearance than ever, and which gained them the applause of Franz and Albert. Albert had fastened the faded bunch of violets to his button-hole. At the first sound of the bell they hastened into the Rue du Cours by the Via Vittoria. At the second turn, a bunch of fresh violets, thrown from a carriage filled with *paillassines*, indicated to Albert that, like himself and his friend, the peasants had changed their costume also ; and whether it was the result of chance, or whether a similar feeling had possessed both parties, while he had taken their costume, they had taken his.

Albert placed the fresh bouquet in his button-hole, but he kept the faded one in his hand ; and when he again met the *calèche* he raised it expressively to his lips, — an action which seemed greatly to amuse not only the fair lady who had thrown it, but her joyous companions also. The day was as gay as the preceding one, perhaps even more animated and noisy ; they saw the count for an instant at his window, but when they again passed he had disappeared. It is needless to say that the flirtation between Albert and the fair peasant continued all day. In the evening, on his return, Franz found a letter from the embassy, to inform him he would have the honor of being received by his Holiness the next day. At each previous visit he had made to Rome he had solicited and

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obtained the same favor; and incited as much by a religious feeling as by gratitude, he was unwilling to quit the capital of the Christian world without laying his respectful homage at the feet of one of Saint Peter's successors, who has set a rare example of all virtues. For that day, then, he was not in a mood to think much of the Carnival, — for in spite of his condescension and touching kindness, one cannot incline one's self without awe before the venerable and noble old man called Gregory XVI.

On his return from the Vatican, Franz carefully avoided the Rue du Cours; he brought away with him a treasure of pious thoughts, to which the mad gayety of the Carnival would have been profanation. At ten minutes past five Albert entered. He was at the summit of joy. The *paillassine* had reassumed her peasant's costume, and as she passed she had raised her mask. She was charming. Franz congratulated Albert, who received his congratulations with the air of a man conscious they are merited; He had recognized by certain unmistakable signs that the beautiful unknown belonged to the aristocracy. He had made up his mind to write to her the next day. Franz remarked, while he gave these details, that Albert seemed to have something to ask of him, but that he was unwilling to ask it. He insisted upon it, declaring beforehand that he was willing to make any sacrifice he required. Albert let himself be pressed just as long as friendship required, and then avowed to Franz that he would do him a great favor by allowing him to occupy the carriage alone the next day. Albert attributed to Franz's absence the extreme kindness of the fair peasant in raising her mask. Franz was of course not selfish enough to stop Albert in the middle of an adventure that promised to prove so agreeable to his curiosity and so flattering to his vanity. He felt assured that the complete unreserve of his friend

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would duly inform him of all that happened; and as during two or three years that he had travelled in Italy he had found no opportunity to start such an intrigue on his own account, Franz was by no means sorry to learn how to act on such an occasion. He therefore promised Albert that he would content himself on the morrow with witnessing the Carnival from the windows of the Rospoli Palace.

The next morning he saw Albert pass and repass. He held an enormous bouquet, which he doubtless meant to make the bearer of his amorous epistle. This belief was changed into certainty when Franz saw the bouquet (remarkable by a circle of white camellias) in the hand of a charming *paillassine* dressed in rose-colored satin. And so when evening came Albert was elated, not with joy, but with delirium; he had no doubt that the fair unknown would reply in the same manner. Franz anticipated his wishes by telling him that the noise fatigued him, and that he should pass the next day in writing and looking over his journal.

Albert was not wrong in his expectations, for the next evening Franz saw him enter shaking triumphantly a folded paper he held by one corner. "Well," said he, "was I mistaken?"

"She has answered you!" cried Franz.

"Read!" This word was pronounced in a manner impossible to describe. Franz took the letter, and read:

Tuesday evening, at seven o'clock, descend from your carriage opposite the Via dei Pontefici, and follow the Roman peasant who snatches your *moccoletto* from you. When you arrive at the first step of the church of San Giacomo, be sure to fasten a knot of rose-colored ribbons to the shoulder of your costume of *paillasse*, in order that you may be recognized. Until then you will not see me.

CONSTANCY AND DISCRETION.

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"Well," asked he, when Franz had finished, "what do you think of that?"

"I think that the adventure is assuming a very agreeable appearance."

"I think so too," replied Albert; "and I very much fear you will go alone to the Duc de Bracciano's ball."

Franz and Albert had received that morning an invitation from the celebrated Roman banker. "Take care, Albert," said Franz. "All the nobility of Rome will be present; and if your fair unknown belongs to the higher class of society, she must go there."

"Whether she goes there or not, my opinion is still the same," returned Albert.

"You have read the letter?"

"Yes."

"You know how imperfectly the women of the middle class are educated in Italy?"

"Yes."

"Well; read the letter again. Look at the writing, and find a fault in the language or orthography." The writing was in fact charming, and the orthography irreproachable.

"You are born to good fortune," said Franz, as he returned the letter.

"Laugh as much as you will," replied Albert, "I am in love."

"You alarm me," cried Franz. "I see that I shall not only go alone to the Duc de Bracciano's, but also return to Florence alone."

"If my unknown be as amiable as she is beautiful," said Albert, "I shall fix myself at Rome for six weeks at least. I adore Rome, and I have always had a great taste for archæology."

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"Come, two or three more such adventures, and I do not despair of seeing you a member of the academy."

Doubtless Albert was about to discuss seriously his right to the academic chair when they were informed that dinner was ready. Albert's love had not taken away his appetite. He hastened with Franz to seat himself, intending to resume the discussion after dinner. After dinner the Count of Monte Cristo was announced. They had not seen him for two days. Maître Pastrini informed them that business had called him to Civita Vecchia. He had started the previous evening, and had returned only an hour since. He was charming. Whether he kept a watch over himself, or whether accident did not sound the acrimonious chords that certain circumstances had already touched, he was like everybody else. This man was an enigma to Franz. The count must feel sure he recognized him, and yet had not let fall a single word that indicated he had seen him anywhere. On his side, however great Franz's desire was to allude to their former interview, the fear of its being disagreeable to the man who had loaded himself and his friend with kindness prevented him from mentioning it. The count had learned that the two friends had sent to secure a box at the Argentina Theatre, and were told they were all let. In consequence, he brought them the key of his own; at least such was the apparent motive of his visit. Franz and Albert made some difficulty, alleging their fear of depriving him of it; but the count replied that as he was going to the Palli Theatre, the box at the Argentina Theatre would not be used if they did not occupy it. This assurance determined the two friends to accept it.

Franz had become by degrees accustomed to the count's paleness, which had so forcibly struck him the first time he saw him. He could not refrain from admiring the

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severe beauty of his features, the only defect, or rather the principal quality of which was the pallor. Veritable hero of Byron! Franz could not, we will not say see him, but even think of him without representing his stern head on the shoulders of Manfred, or beneath the casque of Lara. His forehead was marked by the line that indicates the constant presence of a bitter thought; he had those fiery eyes that seem to penetrate to the heart, and the haughty and disdainful upper lip that gives to the words it utters a peculiar character that impresses them on the minds of those to whom they are addressed. The count was no longer young. He was at least forty; and yet it was easy to understand that he was formed to rule the young men with whom he was now associated. In reality, to complete his resemblance with the fantastic heroes of the English poet, the count seemed to have the power of fascination. Albert was constantly expatiating on their good fortune in meeting such a man. Franz was less enthusiastic; but the count exercised over him also the ascendency a strong mind always acquires. He thought several times of the project the count had of visiting Paris; and he had no doubt but that with his eccentric character, his characteristic face, and his colossal fortune, he would produce a great effect there. And yet he did not wish to be at Paris when the count was there.

The evenings passed as evenings mostly pass at Italian theatres; that is, not in listening to the music, but in paying visits and conversing. The Comtesse G —— wished to revive the subject of the count, but Franz announced he had something far newer to tell her; and in spite of Albert's demonstrations of affected modesty, he informed the countess of the great event which had preoccupied them for the last three days. As similar intrigues are not uncommon in Italy, if we may credit travellers, the count-

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ess did not manifest the least incredulity, but congratulated Albert on his success. They promised, upon separating, to meet at the Duc de Bracciano's ball, to which all Rome was invited. The heroine of the bouquet kept her word; neither on the morrow nor on the day following did she give Albert any sign of her existence.

At length arrived the Tuesday, the last and most tumultuous day of the Carnival. On Tuesday the theatres open at ten o'clock in the morning, as Lent begins at eight at night. On Tuesday all those who through want of money, time, or enthusiasm have not been to see the Carnival before, mingle in the gayety, and contribute to the noise and excitement. From two o'clock till five Franz and Albert followed in the procession, exchanging handfuls of *confetti* with the other carriages and the pedestrians, who crowded among the horses' feet and the carriage-wheels without a single accident, a single dispute, or a single fight. The fêtes are veritable days of pleasure to the Italians. The author of this history, who has resided five or six years in Italy, does not recollect to have ever seen a ceremony interrupted by one of those events which so often accompany celebrations among ourselves. Albert was triumphant in his costume of *paillasse*. A knot of rose-colored ribbons fell from his shoulder almost to the ground. In order that there might be no confusion, Franz wore his peasant's costume.

As the day advanced, the tumult became greater. There was not on the pavement, in the carriages, at the windows, a single tongue that was silent, a single arm that did not move. It was a human storm, composed of a thunder of cries, and a hail of confectionery, flowers, eggs, oranges, and bouquets. At three o'clock the sound of fireworks, let off on the Place del Popolo and the Palais de Venise, heard with difficulty amid the din and confusion, announced

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that the races were about to begin. The races, like the *moccoli*, are one of the episodes peculiar to the last days of the Carnival. At the sound of the fireworks the carriages instantly broke the ranks, and retired by the adjacent streets. All these evolutions are executed with an inconceivable address and marvellous rapidity, without the police interfering in the matter. The pedestrians ranged themselves against the walls; then the trampling of horses and the clashing of steel were heard. A detachment of carbineers, fifteen abreast, galloped up the Rue du Cours in order to clear it for the *barberi*. When the detachment arrived at the Palais de Venise, a second volley of fireworks was discharged, to announce that the street was clear. Almost instantly, in the midst of a tremendous and general outcry, seven or eight horses, excited by the shouts of three hundred thousand spectators, passed by like lightning. Then the Castle of St. Angelo fired three cannons to indicate that Number Three had won. Immediately, without any other signal, the carriages moved on, flowing on towards the Corso, down all the streets, like torrents pent up for a while, which again flow into the parent river; and the immense stream again continued its course between its two banks of granite.

A new source of noise and movement was added to the crowd. The sellers of *moccoletti* entered on the scene. The *moccoli*, or *moccoletti*, are candles which vary in size from the paschal taper to the rushlight, and which stimulate the actors in the great scene which terminates the Carnival to two diverse enterprises: (1) to preserve their *moccoletti* alight; (2) to extinguish the *moccoletti* of others. The *moccoletto* is like life: man has found but one means of transmitting it, and that one comes from God; but he has discovered a thousand means of taking it away, although the Devil has somewhat aided him. The *moccoletto* is

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kindled by approaching it to a light. But who can describe the thousand means of extinguishing the *moccoletto?* — the gigantic bellows, the monstrous extinguishers, the superhuman fans. Every one hastened to purchase *moccoletti,* — Franz and Albert among the rest.

The night was rapidly approaching; and already, at the cry of "*Moccoli!*" repeated by the shrill voices of a thousand venders, two or three stars began to burn among the crowd. It was a signal. At the end of ten minutes fifty thousand lights glittered, descending from the Palais de Venise to the Place del Popolo, and mounting from the Place del Popolo to the Palais de Venise. It seemed the fête of Jack-o'-lanterns. It is impossible to form any idea of it without having seen it. Suppose all the stars had descended from the sky and mingled in a wild dance on the face of the earth, — the whole accompanied by cries that were never heard in any other part of the world. The *facchino* follows the prince, the Transteverian the citizen, every one blowing, extinguishing, relighting. Had old Æolus appeared at this moment, he would have been proclaimed king of the *moccoli,* and Aquilo the heir-presumptive to the throne. This flaming race continued for two hours; the Rue du Cours was light as day; the features of the spectators on the third and fourth stories were visible. Every five minutes Albert took out his watch; at length it pointed to seven. The two friends were in the Via dei Pontefici. Albert sprang out, bearing his *moccoletto* in his hand. Two or three masks strove to knock his *moccoletto* out of his hand; but Albert, a first-rate pugilist, sent them rolling in the street, one after the other, and continued his course towards the church of San Giacomo. The steps were crowded with masks, who strove to snatch each other's torches. Franz followed Albert with his eyes, and saw him mount the first step. Instantly a

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mask, wearing the well-known costume of a female peasant, snatched his *moccoletto* from him without his offering any resistance. Franz was too far off to hear what they said, but without doubt, nothing hostile passed, for he saw Albert disappear arm-in-arm with the peasant girl. He watched them pass through the crowd some time, but at length he lost sight of them in the Via Macello. Suddenly the bell that gives the signal for the end of the Carnival sounded, and at the same instant all the *moccoletti* were extinguished as if by enchantment. It seemed as though one immense blast of the wind had extinguished every one. Franz found himself in utter darkness. No sound was audible save that of the carriages that conveyed the masks home; nothing was visible save a few lights that burned behind the windows. The Carnival was over.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE CATACOMBS OF ST. SEBASTIAN.

In his whole life perhaps Franz had never experienced so sudden an impression, so rapid a transition from gayety to sadness as in this moment. It seemed as though Rome, under the magic breath of some demon of the night, had suddenly been changed into a vast tomb. By a chance, which added yet more to the intensity of the darkness, the moon, which was on the wane, would not rise until eleven o'clock, and the streets which the young man traversed were plunged in the deepest obscurity. The distance was short; and at the end of ten minutes his carriage, or rather the count's, stopped before the Hôtel de Londres. Dinner was waiting; but as Albert had told him that he should not return so soon, Franz sat down without him. Maître Pastrini, who had been accustomed to see them dine together, inquired into the cause of his absence, and Franz replied that Albert had received on the previous evening an invitation which he had accepted. The sudden extinction of the *moccoletti*, the darkness which had replaced the light, and the silence which had succeeded the turmoil had left in Franz's mind a certain depression which was not free from uneasiness. He therefore dined very silently, in spite of the officious attention of his host, who presented himself two or three times to inquire if he wanted anything.

Franz resolved to wait for Albert as late as possible. He ordered the carriage, therefore, for eleven o'clock, desiring

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Maître Pastrini to inform him the moment Albert returned to the hotel. At eleven o'clock Albert had not come back. Franz dressed himself and went out, telling his host that he was going to pass the night at the Duc de Bracciano's. The house of the Duc de Bracciano is one of the most delightful in Rome; his lady, one of the last heiresses of the Colonnas, does its honors with the most consummate grace, and thus their fêtes have a European celebrity. Franz and Albert had brought to Rome letters of introduction to them; and the first question on Franz's arrival was, where was his travelling companion. Franz replied that he had left him at the moment they were about to extinguish the *moccoli*, and that he had lost sight of him in the Via Macello.

"Then he has not returned?" said the duke.

"I waited for him until this hour," replied Franz.

"And do you know whither he went?"

"No, not precisely; however, I think it was something very like an assignation."

"The devil!" said the duke, "this is a bad day, or rather a bad night, to be out late; is it not, Countess?" These words were addressed to the Comtesse G——, who had just arrived, and was leaning on the arm of M. Torlonia, the duke's brother.

"I think, on the contrary, that it is a charming night," replied the countess; "and those who are here will complain of only one thing, — its too rapid flight."

"I am not speaking," said the duke, with a smile, "of the persons who are here. The only danger here is, — for the men, that of falling in love with you; and for the women, that of falling ill of jealousy at seeing you so lovely. I allude to those who are out in the streets of Rome."

"Ah!" asked the countess, "who is out in the

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streets of Rome at this hour, unless it be to go to a ball?"

"Our friend, Albert de Morcerf, Countess, whom I left in pursuit of his unknown about seven o'clock this evening," said Franz, "and whom I have not seen since."

"And don't you know where he is?"

"Not at all."

"Is he armed?"

"He is *en paillasse*."

"You should not have allowed him to go," said the duke to Franz, — "you, who know Rome better than he does."

"You might as well have tried to stop Number Three of the *barberi*, who gained the prize in the race to-day," replied Franz; "and besides, what could happen to him?"

"Who can tell? The night is gloomy, and the Tiber is very near the Via Macello."

Franz felt a shudder run through his veins at observing the feeling of the duke and the countess so much in unison with his own anxiety. "I informed them at the hotel that I had the honor of passing the night here, Duke," said Franz, "and desired them to come and inform me of his return."

"Ah!" replied the duke, "here, I think, is one of my servants who is seeking you."

The duke was not mistaken; when he saw Franz the servant came up to him. "Your Excellency," he said, "the master of the Hôtel de Londres has sent to let you know that a man is waiting for you with a letter from the Vicomte de Morcerf."

"A letter from the viscount!" exclaimed Franz.

"Yes."

"And who is the man?"

"I do not know."

"Why did he not bring it to me here?"

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"The messenger did not say."

"And where is the messenger?"

"He went away as soon as he saw me enter the ball-room to find you."

"Oh!" said the countess to Franz, "go with all speed! Poor young man! perhaps some accident has happened to him."

"I will hasten," replied Franz.

"Shall you return to give us any information?" inquired the countess.

"Yes, if it is not any serious affair; otherwise I cannot answer as to what I may do myself."

"Be prudent, in any event," said the countess.

"Oh! be assured of that."

Franz took his hat and went away in haste. He had sent away his carriage with orders for it to fetch him at two o'clock: fortunately the Palace Bracciano, which is on one side in the Rue du Cours and on the other in the Place des Saints Apôtres, is hardly ten minutes' walk from the Hôtel de Londres. As he came near the hotel Franz saw a man in the middle of the street. He had no doubt that it was the messenger from Albert. The man was wrapped up in a large cloak. He went up to him, but to his extreme astonishment, the man first addressed him. "What does your Excellency want of me?" he asked, retreating a step, as if to keep on his guard.

"Are not you the person who brought me a letter," inquired Franz, "from the Vicomte de Morcerf?"

"Your Excellency lodges at Pastrini's hotel?"

"I do."

"Your Excellency is the travelling companion of the viscount?"

"I am."

"Your Excellency's name—"

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"Is the Baron Franz d'Épinay."

"Then it is to your Excellency that this letter is addressed."

"Is there any answer?" inquired Franz, taking the letter from him.

"Yes; your friend at least hopes so."

"Come upstairs with me and I will give it to you."

"I prefer waiting here," said the messenger, with a smile.

"And why?"

"Your Excellency will know when you have read the letter."

"Shall I find you, then, here?"

"Certainly."

Franz entered the hotel. On the staircase he met Maître Pastrini. "Well?" said the landlord.

"Well, what?" responded Franz.

"You have seen the man who desired to speak with you from your friend?" he asked of Franz.

"Yes, I have seen him," he replied, "and he has handed this letter to me. Light the candle in my apartment, if you please."

The innkeeper gave orders to a servant to go before Franz with a candle. The young man had found Maître Pastrini looking very much alarmed, and this had only made him the more anxious to read Albert's letter; and thus he went instantly towards the waxlight, and unfolded the letter. It was written and signed by Albert. Franz read it twice before he could comprehend what it contained. It was thus conceived: —

My dear Fellow, — The moment you have received this, have the kindness to take from my pocket-book, which you will find in the square drawer of the secretary, the letter of credit; add your own to it, if it be not sufficient. Run to

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Torlonia, draw from him instantly four thousand piastres, and give them to the bearer. It is urgent that I should have this money without delay. I do not say more, relying on you as you may rely on me. Your friend,

ALBERT DE MORCERF.

P. S. I now believe in Italian banditti.

Below these lines were written in a strange hand the following in Italian: —

Se alle sei della mattina le quattro mila piastre non sono nelle mie mani, alle sette il Conte Alberto avrà cessato di vivere.[1]

LUIGI VAMPA.

This second signature explained all to Franz, who now understood the objection of the messenger to coming up into the apartment: the street was safer for him. Albert, then, had fallen into the hands of the famous chief of banditti in whose existence he had for so long a time refused to believe. There was no time to lose. He hastened to open the secretary, and found the pocket-book in the drawer, and in it the letter of credit. It was for six thousand piastres in all; but of these six thousand Albert had already expended three thousand. As to Franz, he had no letter of credit, as he lived at Florence, and had come to Rome to pass only seven or eight days; he had brought but a hundred louis, and of these he had not more than fifty left. Thus seven or eight hundred piastres were wanting to them both to make up the sum that Albert required. True, he might in such a case rely on the kindness of M. Torlonia. He was therefore about to return to the Palace Bracciano without loss of time, when sud-

[1] If by six in the morning the four thousand piastres are not in my hands, by seven o'clock the Vicomte Albert de Morcerf will have ceased to live.

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denly a luminous idea crossed his mind. He remembered the Count of Monte Cristo. Franz was about to ring for Maître Pastrini, when that worthy presented himself. "My dear sir," he said hastily, "do you know if the count is within?"

"Yes, your Excellency; he has this moment returned."

"Is he in bed?"

"I should say no."

"Then ring at his door, if you please, and request him to be so kind as to give me an audience."

Maître Pastrini did as he was desired, and returning five minutes after, he said, "The count awaits your Excellency."

Franz went along the corridor, and a servant introduced him to the count. He was in a small cabinet which Franz had not yet seen, and which was surrounded with divans. The count came towards him. "Well, what good wind blows you hither at this hour?" said he; "have you come to sup with me? It would be very kind of you."

"No; I have come to speak to you of a very serious matter."

"A serious matter!" said the count, looking at Franz with the earnestness usual to him; "and what may it be?"

"Are we alone?"

"Yes," replied the count, going to the door, and returning. Franz gave him Albert's letter.

"Read that," he said.

The count read it. "Ah, ah!" said he.

"Did you see the postscript?"

"I did, indeed, —

Se alle sei della mattina le quattro mila piastre non sono nelle mie mani, alle sette il Conte Alberto avrà cessato di vivere. LUIGI VAMPA.

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"What do you think of that?" inquired Franz.

"Have you the money he demands?"

"Yes, all but eight hundred piastres."

The count went to his secretary, opened it, and pulling out a drawer filled with gold, said to Franz, "I hope you will not offend me by applying to any one but myself."

"You see, on the contrary, I come to you first and instantly," replied Franz.

"And I thank you; help yourself;" and he made a sign to Franz to take what he pleased.

"Is it absolutely necessary, then, to send the money to Luigi Vampa?" asked the young man, looking fixedly in his turn at the count.

"Judge for yourself," replied he; "the postscript is explicit."

"I think that if you would take the trouble of reflecting, you could find a way of simplifying the negotiation," said Franz.

"How so?" returned the count, with surprise.

"If we were to go together to Luigi Vampa, I am sure he would not refuse you Albert's freedom."

"What influence can I possibly have over a bandit?"

"Have you not just rendered him one of those services that are never forgotten?"

"What is that?"

"Have you not saved Peppino's life?"

"Ah, ah!" said the count, "who told you that?"

"No matter; I know it."

The count knit his brows and remained silent an instant. "And if I went to seek Vampa, would you accompany me?"

"If my society would not be disagreeable."

"Be it so. It is a lovely night; and a walk in the suburbs of Rome will do us both good."

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"Shall I take any arms?"

"For what purpose?"

"Any money?"

"It is useless. Where is the man who brought the letter?"

"In the street."

"He awaits the answer?"

"Yes."

"I must learn where we are going. I will summon him hither."

"It is useless; he would not come up."

"To your apartments, perhaps; but he will not make any difficulty in entering mine."

The count went to the window of the apartment that looked on to the street, and whistled in a peculiar manner. The man in the mantle quitted the wall and advanced into the centre of the street. "*Salite!*" said the count, in the same tone in which he would have given an order to his servant. The messenger obeyed without the least hesitation, but rather with alacrity, and mounting the steps of the passage at a bound, entered the hotel; five seconds afterwards he was at the door of the cabinet. "Ah, it is you, Peppino," said the count. But Peppino, instead of answering, threw himself on his knees, seized the count's hand and covered it with kisses.

"Ah," said the count, "you have then not forgotten that I saved your life; that is strange, for it is a week ago!"

"No, Excellency; and never shall I forget it," returned Peppino, with an accent of profound gratitude.

"Never! That is a long time; but it is something that you believe so. Rise and answer." Peppino glanced anxiously at Franz. "Oh, you may speak before his Excellency," said the count; "he is one of my friends.

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You allow me to give you this title?" continued the count, in French; "it is necessary in order to gain this man's confidence."

"You can speak before me," said Franz; "I am a friend of the count's."

"Good!" returned Peppino. "I am ready to answer any questions your Excellency may address to me."

"How did the Vicomte Albert fall into Luigi's hands?"

"Excellency, the Frenchman's carriage passed several times the one in which was Teresa."

"The chief's mistress?"

"Yes. The Frenchman threw her a bouquet; Teresa returned it, — with the consent of the chief, who was in the carriage."

"What!" cried Franz; "was Luigi Vampa in the carriage with the Roman peasants?"

"It was he who drove, disguised as the coachman," replied Peppino.

"Well?" said the count.

"Well, then, the Frenchman took off his mask; Teresa, with the chief's consent, did the same. The Frenchman asked for a rendezvous; Teresa gave him one, — only, instead of Teresa, it was Beppo who was on the steps of the church of San Giacomo."

"What!" exclaimed Franz, "the peasant girl who snatched his *moccoletto* from him —"

"Was a lad of fifteen," replied Peppino. "But it was no disgrace to your friend to have been deceived; Beppo has taken in plenty of others."

"And Beppo led him outside the walls?" said the count.

"Exactly so; a carriage was waiting at the end of Via Macello. Beppo got in, inviting the Frenchman to follow

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him, and he did not wait to be asked twice. He gallantly offered the right-hand seat to Beppo, and sat by him. Beppo told him he was going to take him to a villa a league from Rome; the Frenchman assured him he would follow him to the end of the world. The coachman went up the Rue di Ripetta and out by the Porta San Paolo. When they were two hundred yards outside, as the Frenchman became somewhat too forward, Beppo put a brace of pistols to his head; the coachman pulled up and did the same. At the same time four of the band, who were concealed on the banks of the Almo, surrounded the carriage. The Frenchman made some resistance and nearly strangled Beppo; but he could not resist five armed men, and was forced to yield. They made him get out, walk along the banks of the river, and then brought him to Teresa and Luigi, who were waiting for him in the catacombs of St. Sebastian."

"Well," said the count, turning towards Franz, "it seems to me that this is a very pretty story. What do you say to it?"

"Why, that I should think it very amusing," replied Franz, "if it had concerned any one but poor Albert."

"And in truth, if you had not found me here," said the count, "it might have proved a gallant adventure which would have cost your friend dear; but now, be assured, his alarm will be the only serious consequence."

"And shall we go and find him?" inquired Franz.

"Oh, decidedly. He is in a very picturesque place; do you know the catacombs of St. Sebastian?"

"I was never in them, but I have often resolved to visit them."

"Well, here is an opportunity made to your hand, and it would be difficult to contrive a better. Have you a carriage?"

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"No."

"That is of no consequence; I always have one ready, day and night."

"Always ready?"

"Yes. I am a very capricious being; and I should tell you that sometimes when I rise, or after my dinner, or in the middle of the night, I resolve on starting for some particular point, and away I go." The count rang, and a footman appeared. "Order out the carriage," he said, "and remove the pistols which are in the holsters. You need not awaken the coachman; Ali will drive."

In a moment the noise of wheels was heard, and the carriage stopped at the door. The count took out his watch. "Half-past twelve," he said. "We might start at five o'clock and be in time; but the delay may cause your friend to pass an uneasy night, and therefore we had better go with all speed to extricate him from the hands of the infidels. Are you still resolved to accompany me?"

"More determined than ever."

"Well, then, come along."

Franz and the count went downstairs, accompanied by Peppino. At the door they found the carriage. Ali was on the box, in whom Franz recognized the dumb slave of the grotto of Monte Cristo. Franz and the count got into the carriage. Peppino placed himself beside Ali, and they set off at a rapid pace. Ali had received his instructions, and went down the Rue du Cours, crossed the Campo Vaccino, went up the Strada San Gregorio, and reached the gates of St. Sebastian. There the porter raised some difficulties, but the Count of Monte Cristo produced an authority from the governor of Rome to quit or enter the city at any and all hours of the day or night; the portcullis was therefore raised, the porter had a louis for his trouble,

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and they went on their way. The road which the carriage now traversed was the ancient Appian Way, and bordered with tombs. From time to time, by the light of the moon, which began to rise, Franz imagined that he saw a sentinel stand out from the ruin, and suddenly retreat into the darkness on a signal from Peppino. A short time before they reached the circus of Caracalla the carriage stopped, Peppino opened the door, and the count and Franz alighted.

"In ten minutes," said the count to his companion, "we shall arrive there."

He then took Peppino aside, gave him some order in a low voice, and Peppino went away, taking with him a torch, brought with them in the carriage. Five minutes elapsed, during which Franz saw the shepherd advance along a narrow path in the midst of the irregular ground formed by upheavals in the plain of Rome, and disappear in the midst of the high red herbage, which seemed like the bristling mane of some enormous lion. "Now," said the count, "let us follow him." Franz and the count in their turn then advanced along the same path, which at the end of a hundred paces led them by a declivity to the bottom of a small valley. They then perceived two men conversing in the shade.

"Ought we to advance?" asked Franz of the count; "or should we pause?"

"Let us go on; Peppino will have warned the sentry of our coming."

One of these two men was Peppino, and the other a bandit on the lookout. Franz and the count advanced, and the bandit saluted them.

"Your Excellency," said Peppino, addressing the count, "if you will follow me, the opening of the catacombs is close at hand."

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"Go on, then," replied the count.

They came to an opening behind a clump of bushes, and in the midst of a pile of rocks by which a man could scarcely pass. Peppino glided first into this crevice; but after advancing a few paces the passage widened. Then he paused, lighted his torch, and turned round to see if they came after him. The count first reached a kind of square space, and Franz followed him closely. The path sloped in a gentle descent, and widened as they proceeded; still Franz and the count were compelled to advance stooping, and scarcely able to proceed two abreast. They went on a hundred and fifty paces thus, and then were stopped by "Who goes there?" At the same time they saw the reflection of their torch on the barrel of a carbine.

"A friend!" responded Peppino; and advancing alone towards the sentry, he said a few words to him in a low tone, and then he, like the first, saluted the nocturnal visitors, making a sign that they might proceed.

Behind the sentinel was a staircase with twenty steps. Franz and the count descended these, and found themselves in a kind of cross-roads, forming a burial-ground. Five roads diverged like the rays of a star, and the walls, dug into niches in the shape of coffins, showed that they were at last in the catacombs. In one of the cavities whose extent it was impossible to determine some rays of light were visible. The count laid his hand on Franz's shoulder. "Would you like to see a camp of bandits in repose?" he inquired.

"Certainly," replied Franz.

"Come with me, then. Peppino, extinguish the torch."

Peppino obeyed, and Franz and the count were suddenly in utter darkness; but fifty paces in advance of them there played along the wall some reddish beams of light, more visible since Peppino had put out his torch. They ad-

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vanced silently, the count guiding Franz as if he had the singular faculty of seeing in the dark. Franz himself, however, distinguished his way more plainly in proportion as he advanced towards the rays of light, which served them as a guide. Three arcades, of which the middle served as a door, gave them passage. These arcades opened on one side into the corridor in which were the count and Franz, and on the other into a large square chamber entirely surrounded by niches similar to those of which we have spoken. In the midst of this chamber were four stones, which had formerly served as an altar, as was evident from the cross which still surmounted them. A lamp, placed at the base of a pillar, lighted up with its pale and flickering flame the singular scene which presented itself to the eyes of the two visitors concealed in the shadow. A man was seated with his elbow leaning on the column, and was reading with his back turned to the arcades, through the openings of which the new-comers contemplated him. This was the chief of the band, Luigi Vampa. Around him and in groups, according to their fancy, lying in their mantles, or with their backs against a kind of stone bench which went all around the Columbarium, were to be seen twenty brigands or more, each having his carbine within reach. At the farther end, silent, scarcely visible, and like a shadow, was a sentinel, who was walking up and down before a kind of opening, which was distinguishable only as in that spot the darkness seemed thicker. When the count thought Franz had gazed sufficiently on this picturesque tableau, he raised his finger to his lips, to warn him to be silent, and ascending the three steps which led to the corridor of the Columbarium, entered the chamber by the centre arcade, and advanced towards Vampa, who was so intent on the book before him that he did not hear the noise of his footsteps.

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"Who goes there?" cried the sentinel, less occupied, and who saw by the lamp's light a shadow which approached his chief. At this sound, Vampa rose quickly, drawing at the same moment a pistol from his girdle. In a moment all the bandits were on their feet, and twenty carbines were levelled at the count. "Well," said he, in a voice perfectly calm, and no muscle of his countenance disturbed, — "well, my dear Vampa, it appears to me that you receive a friend with a great deal of ceremony!"

"Ground arms!" exclaimed the chief, with an imperative sign of the hand, while with the other he took off his hat respectfully; then turning to the singular personage who had caused this scene, he said, "Your pardon, Monsieur the Count, but I was so far from expecting the honor of a visit that I did not recognize you."

"It seems that your memory is equally short in everything, Vampa," said the count, "and that not only do you forget people's faces, but also the agreements you make with them."

"What agreements have I forgotten, Monsieur the Count?" inquired the bandit, with the air of a man who having committed an error is anxious to repair it.

"Was it not agreed," asked the count, "that not only my person, but also that of my friends, should be respected by you?"

"And how have I broken that treaty, your Excellency?"

"You have this evening carried off and conveyed hither the Vicomte Albert de Morcerf. Well," continued the count, in a tone that made Franz shudder, "this young gentleman is one of *my friends;* this young gentleman lodges in the same hotel as myself; this young gentleman has been up and down the Corso for eight hours in my private carriage, — and yet, I repeat to you, you have carried him off and conveyed him hither, and," added the count,

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taking the letter from his pocket, "you have set a ransom on him, as if he were an indifferent person."

"Why did you not tell me all this, — you?" inquired the brigand chief, turning towards his men, who all retreated before his look. "Why have you exposed me thus to fail in my word towards a gentleman like the count, who has all our lives in his hands? By the blood of Christ! if I thought that any one of you knew that the young gentleman was the friend of his Excellency, I would blow his brains out with my own hand!"

"Well," said the count, turning towards Franz, "I told you there was some mistake in this."

"Are you not alone?" asked Vampa, with uneasiness.

"I am with the person to whom this letter was addressed, and to whom I desired to prove that Luigi Vampa was a man of his word. Come, your Excellency, here is Luigi Vampa, who will himself express to you his deep regret at the mistake he has committed."

Franz approached, the chief advancing several steps to meet him. "Welcome among us, your Excellency!" he said to him; "you heard what the count just said, and also my reply. Let me add that I would not have such a thing as this happen for the four thousand piastres at which I had fixed your friend's ransom."

"But," said Franz, looking round him uneasily, "where is the viscount? I do not see him."

"Nothing has happened to him, I hope?" said the count, frowning.

"The prisoner is there," replied Vampa, pointing to the hollow space in front of which the bandit was on guard; "and I will go myself and tell him that he is free." The chief went towards the place he had pointed out as Albert's prison, and Franz and the count followed him. "What is the prisoner doing?" inquired Vampa of the sentinel.

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"*Ma foi!* Captain," replied the sentry, "I do not know; for the last hour I have not heard him stir."

"Come in, your Excellency," said Vampa.

The count and Franz ascended seven or eight steps after the chief, who drew back a bolt, and opened a door. Then, by the gleam of a lamp similar to that which lighted the Columbarium, Albert was to be seen wrapped up in a cloak which one of the bandits had lent him, lying in a corner in profound slumber.

"Come!" said the count, smiling with his own peculiar smile, "not so bad for a man who is to be shot at seven o'clock to-morrow morning!"

Vampa looked at Albert with a kind of admiration; he was not insensible to such a proof of courage.

"You are right, Monsieur the Count," he said; "this must be one of your friends." Then, going to Albert, he touched him on the shoulder, saying, "Will your Excellency please to awaken?"

Albert stretched out his arms, rubbed his eyelids, and opened his eyes. "Ah, ah!" said he, "is it you, Captain? You should have allowed me to sleep. I had such a delightful dream: I was dancing the galop at Torlonia's with the Comtesse G——." Then he drew from his pocket his watch, which he had kept that he might see how time sped.

"Half-past one only!" said he. "Why the devil do you rouse me at this hour?"

"To tell you that you are free, your Excellency."

"My dear fellow," replied Albert, with perfect ease of mind, "remember for the future Napoleon's maxim, 'Never awaken me but for bad news;' if you had let me sleep on I should have finished my galop, and have been grateful to you all my life. So, then, they have paid my ransom?"

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"No, your Excellency."

"Well, then, how am I free?"

"Some one to whom I can refuse nothing has come to demand you."

"Come hither?"

"Yes, hither."

"Really! that some one is a most amiable person." Albert looked round, and perceived Franz. "What!" said he, "is it you, my dear Franz, whose devotion and friendship are thus displayed?"

"No, not I," replied Franz; "but our neighbor, the Count of Monte Cristo."

"Ah, ah! Monsieur the Count," said Albert, gayly, and arranging his cravat and wristbands, "you are really most kind, and I hope you will consider me as eternally obliged to you, — in the first place for the carriage, and in the next for this;" and he put out his hand to the count, who shuddered as he gave his own, but who nevertheless did give it. The bandit gazed on this scene with amazement; he was evidently accustomed to see his prisoners tremble before him, and yet here was one whose gay humor was not for a moment altered. As for Franz, he was enchanted at the way in which Albert had sustained the national honor in the presence of the bandit. "My dear Albert," he said, "if you will make haste, we shall yet have time to finish the night at Torlonia's. You may conclude your interrupted galop, so that you will owe no ill-will to Signor Luigi, who has indeed throughout this whole affair acted like a gentleman."

"You are decidedly right; and we may reach the palace by two o'clock. Signor Luigi," continued Albert, "is there any formality to fulfil before I take leave of your Excellency?"

"None, sir," replied the bandit; "you are as free as air."

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"Well, then, a happy and merry life to you! Come, gentlemen, come."

And Albert, followed by Franz and the count, descended the staircase, crossed the square chamber, where stood all the bandits, hat in hand. "Peppino," said the brigand chief, "give me the torch."

"What are you going to do, then?" inquired the count.

"I will show you the way back myself," said the captain; "that is the least honor I can testify to your Excellency." And taking the lighted torch from the hands of the herdsman, he preceded his guests, not as a servant who performs an act of civility, but like a king who precedes ambassadors. On reaching the door he bowed. "And now, Monsieur the Count," added he, "allow me to repeat my apologies; and I hope you will not entertain any resentment at what has occurred."

"No, my dear Vampa," replied the count; "besides, you redeem your errors so politely that one almost feels obliged to you for having committed them."

"Gentlemen," added the chief, turning towards the young men, "perhaps the offer may not appear very tempting to you; but if you should ever feel inclined to pay me a second visit, wherever I may be, you shall be welcome."

Franz and Albert bowed. The count went out first, then Albert. Franz paused for a moment. "Has your Excellency anything to ask me?" said Vampa, with a smile.

"Yes, I have," replied Franz; "I am curious to know what work you were perusing with so much attention as we entered?"

"'Cæsar's Commentaries,'" said the bandit; "it is my favorite work."

"Well, are you coming?" asked Albert.

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"Yes," replied Franz, "here I am!" and he in his turn left the caves.

They advanced to the plain. "Ah, your pardon!" said Albert, turning round; "will you allow me, Captain?" And he lighted his cigar at Vampa's torch. "Now, Monsieur the Count," he said, "let us on with all the speed we may. I am enormously anxious to finish my night at the Duc de Bracciano's."

They found the carriage where they had left it. The count said a word in Arabic to Ali, and the horses went off at great speed. It was just two o'clock by Albert's watch when the two friends entered into the dancing-room. Their return was quite an event; but as they entered together, all uneasiness on Albert's account ceased instantly.

"Madame," said the Vicomte de Morcerf, advancing towards the countess, "yesterday you were so condescending as to promise me a galop; I am rather late in claiming this gracious promise, but here is my friend, whose character for veracity you well know, and he will assure you the delay arose from no fault of mine." And as at this moment the music gave the warning for the waltz, Albert put his arm round the waist of the countess, and disappeared with her in the whirl of dancers. In the mean while Franz was considering the singular shudder that had pervaded the Count of Monte Cristo's frame at the moment when he had been, in some sort, forced to give his hand to Albert.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

ALBERT's first words to his friend on the following morning contained a request that he would accompany him to visit the count. True, he had warmly and energetically thanked him the previous evening; but services such as he had rendered were worthy of a twofold acknowledgment. Franz, who was attracted by some invisible influence towards the count, in which terror was strangely mingled, felt an extreme reluctance to permit his friend to be exposed alone to the singular fascination which the mysterious count seemed to exercise over him, and therefore made no objection to Albert's request, but at once accompanied him; they were ushered into the salon, and five minutes later the count appeared.

"Monsieur the Count," said Albert, advancing to meet him, "permit me to repeat the poor thanks I offered last night, and to assure you that the remembrance of all I owe to you will never be effaced from my memory; I shall always remember the important service you have rendered me, and that to you I am indebted even for my life."

"My dear neighbor," replied the count, with a smile, "you exaggerate your obligations to me. You owe me nothing but the saving of some twenty thousand livres in your travelling expenses. Permit me to congratulate you on the ease and unconcern with which you resigned yourself to your fate."

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"Upon my word," said Albert, "I deserve no credit for what I could not help; namely, a determination to take everything as I found it, and to let those bandits see that although men get into troublesome scrapes all over the world, there is no nation but the French can smile even in the face of grim Death himself. All that, however, has nothing to do with my obligations to you; and I now come to ask you whether in my own person, my family, or connections, I can in any way serve you. My father, the Comte de Morcerf, although of Spanish origin, possesses considerable influence both at the court of France and Madrid, and I unhesitatingly place the best services of myself and all to whom my life is dear, at your disposal."

"M. de Morcerf," replied the count, "your offer, far from surprising me, is precisely what I expected from you; and I accept it in the same spirit of hearty sincerity with which it is made. I had already made up my mind to ask a great favor at your hands."

"What is it?"

"I am wholly a stranger to Paris; it is a city I have never yet seen."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Albert, "that you have reached your present age without visiting Paris? I can scarcely credit it."

"Nevertheless, it is quite true; still, I agree with you in thinking that my present ignorance of the first city in Europe is a reproach to me in every way, and calls for immediate correction. Probably I should have made that important journey long ago had I known any one who could introduce me into that world with which I have no connection."

"Oh! a man like you!" cried Albert.

"You are most kind; but since I find in myself no other merit than the ability to compete as millionnaire

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with M. Aguado or with M. Rothschild, and since I do not go to Paris to speculate, that trifling circumstance has withheld me. Now your offer decides me. Let us see; you undertake, my dear M. de Morcerf" (these words were accompanied by a most peculiar smile), "upon my arrival in France, to open to me the doors of that fashionable world of which I know no more than a Huron or a native of Cochin China."

"Oh, that I do, and with infinite pleasure!" answered Albert; "and so much the more readily as a letter received this morning from my father summons me to Paris in consequence of a treaty for my alliance (my dear Franz, do not smile, I beg of you) with a family of high standing and connected with the very *élite* of Parisian society."

"Alliance by marriage?" said Franz, laughing.

"Good Lord, yes!" answered Albert; "so when you return to Paris you will find me settled down, and perhaps father of a family. That will agree well with my natural gravity, will it not? In any case, Count, I repeat that I and mine are devoted to you, body and soul."

"I accept," said the count, "for I give you my solemn assurance that I only waited an opportunity like the present to realize schemes I have long meditated."

Franz doubted not that these schemes were the same concerning which he had dropped some words in the grotto of Monte Cristo; and while the count spoke, the young man closely examined him in the hope of reading in his face some revelation of the plans which drew him to Paris. But it was very difficult to penetrate to the soul of that man, especially when he veiled it with a smile.

"But tell me now, Count," exclaimed Albert, delighted at the idea of having to introduce so distinguished a person as Monte Cristo, — "tell me truly whether you are in earnest, or if this project of visiting Paris is merely one

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of those chimerical and uncertain things of which we make so many in the course of our lives, but which, like a house built on the sand, is liable to be blown over by the first puff of wind?"

"I pledge you my honor," returned the count, "that I mean to do as I have said; both inclination and positive necessity compel me to visit Paris."

"When do you propose going thither?"

"Have you made up your mind when you shall be there yourself?"

"Certainly I have, — in a fortnight or three weeks' time; that is to say, as fast as I can get there!"

"Well," said the count, "I will give you three months; you see I make an ample allowance for all delays and difficulties."

"And in three months' time," said Albert, "you will be at my house?"

"Shall we make a positive appointment for a particular day and hour?" inquired the count; "only let me warn you that I am desperately punctual."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Albert; "an exact appointment, — that suits me to a dot."

"So be it, then," replied the count; and extending his hand towards a calendar suspended near the chimney-piece, he said, "to-day is the 21st of February," and drawing out his watch, added, "it is exactly half-past ten o'clock. Now promise me to remember this, and expect me on the 21st of May at half-past ten in the forenoon."

"Capital!" exclaimed Albert; "breakfast will be ready."

"Where do you live?"

"No. 27 Rue du Helder."

"Have you bachelor's apartments there? I hope my coming will not put you to any inconvenience."

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"I reside in my father's hotel, but occupy a pavilion at the farther side of the courtyard, entirely separated from the main building."

"Good," replied the count, as taking out his tablets, he wrote down, "No. 27 Rue du Helder, 21st May, half-past ten in the morning." "Now then," said he, returning his tablets to his pocket, "make yourself perfectly easy; the hand of your timepiece will not be more punctual than I shall be."

"Shall I see you again before my departure?" asked Albert.

"That will be according to circumstances; when do you set off?"

"To-morrow evening, at five o'clock."

"In that case I must say adieu to you, as I am compelled to go to Naples, and shall not return hither before Saturday evening or Sunday morning. And you, Monsieur the Baron," pursued the count, addressing Franz, "do you also depart to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"To France?"

"No, to Venice; I shall remain in Italy for another year or two."

"Then we shall not meet in Paris?"

"I fear I shall not have that honor."

"Well, since we must part," said the count, holding out a hand to each of the young men, "allow me to wish you both a safe and pleasant journey."

It was the first time the hand of Franz had come in contact with that of this mysterious man, and unconsciously he shuddered at its touch, for it felt cold and icy as that of a corpse.

"Let us understand each other," said Albert; "it is agreed — is it not? — that you are to be in the Rue du

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Helder on the 21st of May, at half-past ten in the morning, and your word of honor is passed for your punctuality?"

"All that is settled and arranged upon honor," replied the count; "rely upon seeing me at the time and place agreed on."

The young men then rose, bowed to the count, and quitted the room.

"What is the matter?" asked Albert of Franz, when they had returned to their own apartments; "you seem more than commonly thoughtful."

"I will confess to you, Albert," replied Franz, "that I am deeply puzzled to unravel the real career of this strange count; and the appointment you have made to meet him in Paris fills me with a thousand apprehensions."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Albert, "what can there possibly be in that to excite uneasiness? Why, you are mad!"

"As you please," said Franz; "mad or not, so it is."

"Listen to me, Franz," said Albert; "and I am glad of the opportunity to tell you that I have noticed a marked coldness in your manner towards the count, who on the other hand has been simply perfect in his manner towards us. Have you anything against him?"

"Possibly."

"Did you ever meet him previously to coming hither?"

"I have."

"And where?"

"Will you promise me not to repeat a single word of what I am about to tell you?"

"I promise."

"Upon honor?"

"Upon honor."

"That is satisfactory; listen, then."

Franz then related to his friend the history of his ex-

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cursion to the island of Monte Cristo, and of his finding a party of smugglers there, with whom were two Corsican bandits. He dwelt with considerable force and energy on the almost magical hospitality he had received from the count, and the magnificence of his entertainment in the grotto of the "Thousand and One Nights." He recounted all the particulars of the supper, — the hashish, the statues, the dream, and the reality; and how at his awakening there remained no proof or trace of all these events, save the small yacht seen in the distant horizon sailing towards Porto Vecchio. Then he detailed the conversation overheard by him at the Colosseum between the count and Vampa, in which the count had promised to obtain the release of the bandit Peppino, — an engagement which as our readers are aware, he most faithfully fulfilled. At last he arrived at the adventure of the preceding night, and the embarrassment in which he found himself placed by not having six hundred or seven hundred piastres, and his idea of applying to the count, — an idea which had led to results so picturesque and satisfactory.

Albert listened with the most profound attention. "Well," said he, when Franz had concluded, "what do you find to object to in all you have related? The count is fond of travelling, and being rich possesses a vessel of his own. Go to Portsmouth or Southampton, and you will find the harbors crowded with the yachts belonging to wealthy Englishmen who have the same fancy. To have a resting-place in his travels; to escape the frightful cooking which has poisoned us, — me for four months, you for four years; to avoid lying on these abominable beds on which no one can sleep, — he furnishes a place at Monte Cristo. Then, when his place is furnished he fears that the Tuscan Government will drive him away, and that his expenses will be lost money; he therefore buys the island

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and takes its name. Just ask yourself, my good fellow, whether there are not many persons of our acquaintance who assume the names of lands and properties they never in their lives were master of."

"But," said Franz, "how do you account for the circumstance of the Corsican bandits being among the crew of his vessel?"

"Well, what is there surprising in that? Nobody knows better than yourself that the bandits of Corsica are not rogues or thieves, but purely and simply fugitives driven by some vendetta from their native town or village, and that their fellowship involves no disgrace or stigma; for my own part I protest that should I ever visit Corsica, my first visit, ere even I presented myself to the governor or prefect, should be to the bandits of Colomba, if I could only manage to meet them. I find them charming."

"Still," persisted Franz, "I suppose you will allow that such men as Vampa and his band are villains who have no other motive than plunder when they seize your person. How do you explain the influence of the count over those ruffians?"

"My good friend, as in all probability I owe my present safety to that influence, it would ill become me to search too closely into its source. Therefore, instead of condemning him for his intimacy with outlaws, you must give me leave to excuse any little irregularity there may be in such a connection, — not altogether for preserving my life, for my own idea was that it never was in much danger; but certainly for saving me four thousand piastres, which, being translated, means neither more nor less than twenty-four thousand livres of our money, — a sum at which, most assuredly, I should never have been estimated in France; proving most indisputably," added Albert, with a laugh, "that no prophet is honored in his own country."

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"Talking of countries," replied Franz, "of what country is the count; what is his native tongue; what are his means of existence; whence does he derive his immense fortune; what were those events of his early life — a life as marvellous as unknown — that have tinctured his succeeding years with so dark and gloomy a misanthropy? Certainly these are questions that in your place I should like to have answered."

"My dear Franz," replied Albert, "when upon receipt of my letter you found the necessity of asking the count's assistance, you promptly went to him, saying, 'My friend Albert de Morcerf is in danger; help me to deliver him.' Was not that nearly what you said?"

"It was."

"Well, then, did he ask you, 'Who is M. Albert de Morcerf; how does he come by his name, his fortune; what are his means of existence; what is his birth-place; of what country is he a native? Tell me, did he put all these questions to you?"

"I confess he asked me none."

"No; he merely came and freed me from the hands of M. Vampa, where, I can assure you, in spite of all my appearance of ease and unconcern, I did not very particularly care to remain. Now then, Franz, when in return for services so promptly and unhesitatingly rendered, he but asks me to do for him what is done daily for any Russian prince or Italian noble who may pass through Paris, — merely to introduce him into society, — would you have me refuse? My good fellow, you must have lost your senses to think it possible I could act with such cold-blooded policy." And this time it must be confessed that contrary to custom, all the good arguments were on Albert's side.

"Well," said Franz, with a sigh, "do as you please, my

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dear viscount, for your arguments are beyond my powers of refutation. But it is none the less true that this Count of Monte Cristo is a strange man."

"He is a philanthropist," answered the other; "and no doubt his motive in visiting Paris is to compete for the Monthyon prize. If my vote and interest can obtain it for him, I will readily give him the one and promise the other. And now, my dear Franz, let us talk of something else. Come, shall we take our luncheon, and then pay a last visit to St. Peter's?" Franz silently assented; and the following afternoon at half-past five o'clock, the young men parted, — Albert de Morcerf to return to Paris, and Franz d'Épinay to pass a fortnight at Venice. But ere he entered his travelling-carriage, Albert, fearing that his expected guest might forget the engagement he had entered into, placed in the care of the waiter of the hotel a card to be delivered to the Count of Monte Cristo, on which, beneath the name of Albert de Morcerf, he had written in pencil, "27 Rue du Helder, May 21, half-past ten, A. M."

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CHAPTER IX.

THE GUESTS.

In the house in the Rue du Helder, to which Albert had invited the Count of Monte Cristo, preparation was made on the morning of the 21st of May to honor the young man's invitation. Albert de Morcerf inhabited a pavilion situated at a corner of a large court, and directly opposite another building in which were the servants' apartments. Two windows only of the pavilion faced the street; three other windows looked into the court, and two at the back into the garden. Between the court and the garden, built in the heavy style of the imperial architecture, was the large and fashionable dwelling of the Comte and Comtesse de Morcerf. A high wall surrounded the whole of the hotel, surmounted at intervals by vases filled with flowers, and broken in the centre by a large gate of gilded iron which served as the carriage entrance. A small door close to the lodge of the *concierge* gave ingress and egress to the servants or to the masters when they were on foot.

In this choice of the pavilion as Albert's residence it was easy to discern the delicate care of a mother unwilling to part from her son, and yet aware that he required the full exercise of his liberty; also, it must be admitted, the intelligent egotism of the young man himself, captivated by that free and idle life. Through these two windows looking into the street, Albert could see all that passed; the sight of what is going on is so necessary to young men,

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who wish always to see the world traverse their horizon, be that horizon but the street only. Then should anything appear to merit a more minute examination, Albert de Morcerf could follow up his researches by going out at a small gate, similar to that close to the *concierge's* door, and which merits a particular description. It was a little entrance that seemed never to have been opened since the house was built, so entirely was it covered with dust and dirt; but the well-oiled hinges and locks announced a frequent and mysterious employment. This door laughed at the *concierge*, from whose vigilance and jurisdiction it escaped, opening, like the door in the "Arabian Nights," the "Sesame" of Ali Baba, by a cabalistic word, or a concerted tap without, from the sweetest voices or whitest fingers in the world. At the end of a long corridor with which the door communicated, and which formed the ante-chamber, was, on the right, Albert's breakfast-room looking into the court, and on the left the salon looking into the garden. Shrubs and creeping plants covered the windows and hid from the garden and court these two rooms, — the only rooms into which, as they were on the ground-floor, the prying eyes of the curious could penetrate. On the first floor were corresponding rooms, with the addition of a third formed out of the ante-chamber; these three rooms were a salon, a boudoir, and a bedroom. The salon downstairs was only an Algerian divan for the use of smokers. The boudoir upstairs communicated with the bedchamber by an invisible door on the staircase; it was evident that every precaution had been taken. Above this floor was a large studio, which had been increased in size by pulling down the partitions, — a pandemonium, in which the artist and the dandy strove for pre-eminence. There were collected and piled up all Albert's successive caprices, — hunting-horns, bass-viols, flutes, — a whole

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orchestra, for Albert had had, not a taste, but the whim for music; easels, palettes, brushes, pencils, — for the whim for music had been succeeded by a fatuous passion for painting; foils, boxing-gloves, broad-swords, and single-sticks, — for following the example of the fashionable young men of the time, Albert de Morcerf cultivated with far more perseverance than music and drawing the three arts that complete a dandy's education, namely, fencing, boxing, and single-stick; and it was in this room that he received Grisier, Cook, and Charles Lecour. The rest of the furniture of this privileged chamber consisted of old cabinets of the time of Francis I., filled with China and Japan vases, earthenware from Lucca or Robbia, plates of Bernard de Palissy; of old armchairs, which perhaps Henry IV. or Sully, Louis XIII. or Richelieu had occupied, — for two of these armchairs, adorned with a carved shield on which were engraved the *fleur-de-lis* of France on an azure field, evidently came from the Louvre, or at least some royal residence. On these dark and sombre chairs were thrown splendid stuffs, dyed beneath Persia's sun or woven by the fingers of the women of Calcutta or of Chandernagor. What these stuffs were there for it was impossible to say. They awaited, while gratifying the eyes, a destination unknown to their owner himself; in the mean time they filled the room with their golden and silky reflections. In the centre of the room was a piano in rosewood, of Roller and Blanchet, of small dimensions, but containing an orchestra in its narrow and sonorous cavity, and groaning beneath the weight of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Beethoven, Weber, Mozart, Haydn, Grétry, and Porpora. On the walls, over the doors, on the ceiling, were swords, daggers, Malay creeses, maces, battle-axes, suits of armor gilded, damaskeened, and inlaid, dried plants, minerals, and stuffed birds, opening their

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flame-colored wings as if for flight, and their beaks that never close. This was the favorite sitting-room of Albert.

However, on the day of the appointed rendezvous the young man had established himself in the small salon downstairs. There, on a table surrounded at some distance by a large and luxurious divan, every species of tobacco known, from the yellow tobacco of Petersburg to the black tobacco of Sinai, the Maryland, the Porto Rico, and the Latakia, was exposed in those pots of crackled earthenware of which the Dutch are so fond. Beside them in boxes of fragrant wood were ranged, according to their size and quality, *puros*, regalias, havanas, and manillas; and in an open cabinet a collection of German pipes, of chibouques with their amber mouth-pieces ornamented with coral, and of nargiles with their long tubes of morocco, awaited the caprice or the desire of the smokers. Albert had himself presided at the arrangement, or rather the symmetrical derangement which after coffee the guests at a breakfast of modern days like to contemplate through the vapor that escapes from their mouths, and ascends in long and fanciful wreaths to the ceiling. At a quarter to ten a valet entered; he composed, with a little groom named John and who spoke English only, all Albert's establishment, although the cook of the hotel was always at his service, and on great occasions the count's *chasseur* also. This valet, whose name was Germain, and who enjoyed the entire confidence of his young master, held in one hand a number of papers, and in the other a packet of letters which he gave to Albert. Albert glanced carelessly at the different missives, selected two written in a small and delicate hand and enclosed in scented envelopes, opened them, and perused their contents with some attention. "How did these letters come?" said he.

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"One by the post; Madame Danglars's footman left the other."

"Let Madame Danglars know that I accept the place she offers me in her box. Wait; then, during the day, tell Rosa that when I leave the opera I will sup with her as she wishes. Take to her six bottles of assorted wines, — Cyprus, sherry, and Malaga, — and a keg of Ostend oysters; get the oysters at Borel's, and be sure you say they are for me."

"At what o'clock, Monsieur, do you breakfast?"

"What time is it now?"

"A quarter to ten."

"Very well; at half-past ten. Debray will perhaps be obliged to go to his office; and besides [Albert looked at his tablets], it is the hour I appointed with the count, — May 21, at half-past ten, — and though I do not much rely upon his promise, I wish to be punctual. Is Madame the Countess up yet?"

"If Monsieur the Viscount wishes, I will inquire."

"Yes; ask her for one of her *liqueur* cellarets, — mine is incomplete; and tell her I shall have the honor of seeing her about three o'clock, and that I request permission to introduce some one to her."

The valet left the room. Albert threw himself on the divan, tore off the cover of two or three of the papers, looked at the playbills, made a face at perceiving they played an opera and not a ballet, hunted vainly among the advertisements for a new tooth-powder of which he had heard, and threw down, one after the other, the three leading papers of Paris, muttering, "These papers become more and more stupid every day." A moment after, a carriage stopped before the door, and the servant announced M. Lucien Debray. A tall young man, with light hair, clear gray eyes, and thin, compressed lips,

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dressed in a blue coat with buttons of gold beautifully carved, a white neckcloth, and a tortoise-shell eye-glass suspended by a silken thread, and which by an effort of the superciliary and zygomatic nerves he fixed in his eye, entered with a half-official air, without smiling or speaking.

"Good-morning, Lucien! good-morning!" said Albert; "your punctuality really alarms me. What do I say? Punctuality! You, whom I expected last, you arrive at five minutes to ten, when the time fixed was half-past! It is wonderful! Has the ministry fallen?"

"No, my dear fellow," returned the young man, seating himself on the divan; "reassure yourself. We are tottering always, but we never fall; and I begin to believe that we shall pass comfortably into a state of permanence, — without reckoning that the affairs of the Peninsula will completely consolidate us."

"Ah, true! you drive Don Carlos out of Spain."

"No, no, my dear fellow; do not confound our plans. We take him to the other side of the French frontier, and offer him hospitality at Bourges."

"At Bourges?"

"Yes, he has not much to complain of; Bourges is the capital of Charles VII. What! You did n't know that? All Paris knew it yesterday; and the day before it had already transpired on the Bourse, and M. Danglars (I do not know by what means that man contrives to obtain intelligence as soon as we do) speculated for a rise, and won a million!"

"And you another order apparently, for I see you have a blue ribbon at your button-hole."

"Yes, they sent me the order of Charles III.," returned Debray, carelessly.

"Come, do not affect indifference, but confess you were pleased to have it."

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"Oh, it is very well as a finish to the toilet. It looks very neat on a black coat buttoned up."

"And makes you resemble the Prince of Wales or the Duc de Reichstadt."

"It is for that reason you see me so early."

"Because you have the order of Charles III., and you wish to announce the good news to me?"

"No, because I passed the night writing letters, — five and twenty despatches. I returned home at day-break and strove to sleep; but my head ached, and I got up to ride for an hour. At the Bois de Boulogne, *ennui* and hunger attacked me at once, — two enemies who rarely accompany each other, and who are yet leagued against me, a sort of Carlo-republican alliance. I then recollected that you were to give a breakfast this morning, and here I am. I am hungry; feed me. I am bored; amuse me."

"It is my duty as your host," returned Albert, ringing the bell, while Lucien turned over with his gold-mounted cane the papers that lay on the table. "Germain, a glass of sherry and a biscuit. In the mean time, my dear Lucien, here are cigars — contraband, of course; try them, and persuade the minister to sell us such instead of poisoning us with cabbage-leaves."

"*Peste!* I will do nothing of the kind; so long as they came from Government you would find them execrable. Besides, that does not concern the home but the financial department. Address yourself to M. Humann, Section of the Indirect Contributions, Corridor A, No. 56."

"On my word," said Albert, "you astonish me by the extent of your acquaintance. Take a cigar."

"Really, my dear viscount," replied Lucien, lighting a manilla at a rose-colored taper that burned in a stand beautifully enamelled, "how happy you are to have nothing to do; you do not know your own good fortune!"

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"And what would you do, my dear pacificator of kingdoms," replied Morcerf, with a slight degree of irony in his voice, "if you did nothing? What! private secretary to a minister, plunged at the same time into European cabals and Parisian intrigues; having kings, and better still queens to protect, parties to unite, elections to direct; achieving more from your cabinet with your pen and your telegraph than Napoleon did from his battle-fields with his sword and his victories; possessing five and twenty thousand livres a year, besides your place; a horse for which Château-Renaud offered you four hundred louis, and which you would not part with; a tailor who never disappoints you; having access to the Opera, the Jockey Club, and the Variétés, — in all that can you not find enough to amuse you? Well, I will amuse you."

"How?"

"By introducing to you a new acquaintance."

"A man or a woman?"

"A man."

"I know so many already."

"But you do not know this man."

"Where does he come from, — the end of the world?"

"Farther still, perhaps."

"The devil! I hope he does not bring our breakfast with him."

"Oh, no; our breakfast is cooking in the maternal kitchen. You are hungry, then?"

"Humiliating as such a confession is, I am. But I dined at M. de Villefort's, and lawyers always give you very bad dinners. You would think they felt some remorse; did you ever remark that?"

"Ah! depreciate other persons' dinners; you ministers give such splendid ones."

"Yes; but we do not invite people of fashion. If we

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were not forced to entertain a parcel of country boobies because they think and vote with us, we should never dream of dining at home, I assure you."

"Well, take another glass of sherry and another biscuit."

"Willingly. Your Spanish wine is excellent. You see we were quite right to pacify that country."

"Yes; but Don Carlos?"

"Well, Don Carlos will drink Bordeaux; and in ten years we will marry his son to the little queen."

"You will then obtain the Golden Fleece, if you are still in the ministry."

"I think, Albert, you have adopted the system of feeding me on smoke this morning."

"Well, you must allow it is the best thing for the stomach; but I hear Beauchamp in the next room. You can dispute together, and that will pass away the time."

"About what?"

"About the papers."

"My dear friend," said Lucien, with an air of sovereign contempt, "do I ever read the papers?"

"Then you will dispute the more."

"M. Beauchamp," announced the servant.

"Enter, enter!" said Albert, rising and advancing to meet the young man. "Here is Debray, who detests you without reading you, so he says."

"He is quite right," returned Beauchamp; "for I criticise him without knowing what he does. Good-day, Commander!"

"Ah! you know that already," said the private secretary, smiling and shaking hands with him.

"*Pardieu!*"

"And what do they say of it in the world?"

"In which world? we have so many worlds in the year of grace 1838."

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"In the critico-political world, of which you are one of the leaders."

"They say that it is quite fair; and that you sow so much red that you must reap a little blue."

"Come, come! that is not bad!" said Lucien. "Why do you not join our party, my dear Beauchamp? With your talents you would make your fortune in three or four years."

"I only await one thing before following your advice, — that is, a minister who will hold office for six months. My dear Albert, one word; for I must get poor Lucien a respite. Do we breakfast or dine? I must go to the Chamber, for our life is not an idle one."

"We breakfast only. I await two persons; and the instant they arrive we shall sit down to table."

"And what sort of persons do you expect to breakfast?" said Beauchamp.

"A gentleman, and a diplomatist."

"Then we shall have to wait two hours for the gentleman, and three for the diplomatist. I shall come back to dessert; keep me some strawberries, coffee, and cigars. I shall take a cutlet on my way to the Chamber."

"Do not do anything of the sort, — for were the gentleman a Montmorency, and the diplomatist a Metternich, we will breakfast at eleven; in the mean time, follow Debray's example, and take a glass of sherry and a biscuit."

"Be it so; I will stay. I must do something to distract my thoughts."

"You are like Debray; and yet it seems to me that when the minister is out of spirits, the opposition ought to be joyous."

"Ah, you do not know with what I am threatened. I shall hear this morning M. Danglars make a speech at the Chamber of Deputies; and at his wife's this evening

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I shall hear the tragedy of a peer of France. The devil take the constitutional government! Since we had our choice, as they say at least, how could we choose that?"

"I understand; you must lay in a stock of hilarity."

"Do not run down M. Danglars's speeches," said Debray; "he votes for you, for he belongs to the opposition."

"*Pardieu!* that is exactly the worst of all. I am waiting until you send him to speak at the Luxembourg, to laugh at my ease."

"My dear friend," said Albert to Beauchamp, "it is plain that the affairs of Spain are settled, for you are most desperately out of humor this morning. Recollect that Parisian gossip has spoken of a marriage between myself and Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars; I cannot in conscience therefore let you run down the speeches of a man who will one day say to me, 'Monsieur the Viscount, you know I give two millions to my daughter.'"

"Ah, this marriage will never take place," said Beauchamp. "The king has made him a baron and can make him a peer, but he cannot make him a gentleman; and the Comte de Morcerf is too aristocratic to consent for the paltry sum of two millions to a *mésalliance.* The Vicomte de Morcerf can wed only a marchioness."

"Two millions! it is a nice little sum," replied Morcerf.

"It is the capital stock of a theatre on the boulevard, or a railroad from the Jardin des Plantes to La Râpée."

"Never mind what he says, Morcerf," said Debray; "do you marry her. You marry a ticket to a money-bag, it is true; well, but what does that matter? It is better to have a blazon less and a figure more on it. You have seven martlets on your arms. Give three to your wife, and you will still have four; that is one more than M. de Guise had, who so nearly became King of France, and whose cousin was Emperor of Germany."

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"On my word, I think you are right, Lucien," said Albert, absently.

"To be sure; besides, every millionnaire is as noble as a bastard, — that is, he can be."

"Do not say that, Debray," returned Beauchamp, laughing, "for here comes Château-Renaud, who, to cure you of your mania for paradoxes, will pass the sword of Renaud de Montauban, his ancestor, through your body."

"He will sully it then," returned Lucien; "for I am low — very low."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Beauchamp, "the minister quotes Béranger; what shall we come to next?"

"M. de Château-Renaud! M. Maximilian Morrel!" said the servant, announcing two new guests.

"Now, then, to breakfast," said Beauchamp; "for if I remember, you told me you only expected two persons, Albert."

"Morrel!" muttered Albert, — "Morrel! who is he?" But before he had finished, M. de Château-Renaud, a handsome young man of thirty, gentleman all over, — that is, with a figure of a Guiche and the wit of a Montemart, — took Albert's hand. "My dear Albert," said he, "let me introduce to you M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis, my friend, and what is more, my preserver. And besides all that, he carries his credentials in his own person. Salute my hero, Viscount." And he stepped on one side, exhibiting the large and open brow, the piercing eyes, and black mustache of the fine and noble young man whom our readers have already seen at Marseilles under circumstances sufficiently dramatic not to be forgotten. A rich uniform, half French, half Oriental, set off his broad chest, decorated with the order of the Legion of Honor, and his graceful and stalwart figure. The young officer bowed with easy and elegant politeness.

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"Monsieur," said Albert, with affectionate courtesy, "M. le Comte de Château-Renaud knew how much pleasure this introduction would give me; you are his friend, be ours also."

"Well said!" interrupted Château-Renaud; "and pray that should the case require it, he may do as much for you as he did for me."

"What has he done?" asked Albert.

"Oh! nothing worth speaking of," said Morrel; "M. de Château-Renaud exaggerates."

"Not worth speaking of!" cried Château-Renaud; "life is not worth speaking of! — that is rather too philosophical, on my word, Morrel. It is very well for you, who risk your life every day; but for me, who only did so once —"

"What is evident in all this, Baron, is that M. le Capitaine Morrel saved your life."

"Exactly so."

"On what occasion?" asked Beauchamp.

"Beauchamp, my good fellow, you know I am starving," said Debray. "Do not set him off on some long story."

"Well, I do not prevent your sitting down to table," replied Beauchamp; "Château-Renaud can tell us while we eat our breakfast."

"Gentlemen," said Morcerf, "it is only a quarter past ten, and I expect some one else."

"Ah, true! a diplomatist!" observed Debray.

"I know not whether he be or not; I only know that I gave him a mission which he terminated so entirely to my satisfaction that had I been king I should have instantly created him knight of all my orders, even had I been able to offer him the Golden Fleece and the Garter."

"Well, since we are not to sit down to table," said Debray, "take a glass of sherry, and tell us all about it."

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"You all know that I had the fancy of going to Africa."

"It is a road your ancestors have traced for you," said Albert, gallantly.

"Yes, but I doubt that your object was like theirs, — to rescue the Holy Sepulchre."

"You are quite right, Beauchamp," observed the young aristocrat. "It was only to fight as an amateur. I cannot bear duelling ever since two seconds, whom I had chosen to accommodate a quarrel, forced me to break the arm of one of my best friends, one whom you all know, — poor Franz d'Épinay."

"Ah, true!" said Debray, "you did fight some time ago; about what?"

"The devil take me, if I remember!" returned Château-Renaud. "But I recollect perfectly one thing, — that being unwilling to let such talents as mine sleep, I wished to try upon the Arabs the new pistols that had been given to me. In consequence I embarked for Oran, and went from thence to Constantine, where I arrived just in time to witness the raising of the siege. I retreated with the rest. For forty-eight hours I supported the rain during the day and the cold during the night tolerably well; but the third morning my horse died of cold. Poor brute! accustomed to be covered up and to have a stove in the stable, the Arabian finds himself unable to bear ten degrees of cold in Arabia."

"That's why you want to purchase my English horse," said Debray; "you think he will support the cold better."

"You are mistaken, for I have made a vow never to return to Africa."

"You were very much frightened, then?" inquired Beauchamp.

"I confess it; and I had good reason to be so," replied Château-Renaud. "I was retreating on foot, for my horse

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was dead. Six Arabs came up, full gallop, to cut off my head. I shot two with my double-barrelled gun, and two more with my pistols; but I was then disarmed, and two were still left. One seized me by the hair (that is why I now wear it so short, for no one knows what may happen), the other encircled my neck with the yataghan, when this gentleman whom you see here charged them, shot the one who held me by the hair with a pistol, and cleft the skull of the other with his sabre. He had assigned himself the task of saving the life of a man that day; chance caused that man to be myself. When I am rich I will order from Klagmann or Marochetti a statue of Chance."

"Yes," said Morrel, smiling, "it was the 5th of September, — the anniversary of the day on which my father was miraculously preserved; therefore, as far as it lies in my power, I endeavor to celebrate it every year by some action."

"Heroic, is it not?" interrupted Château-Renaud. "In brief, I was the chosen one; but that is not all. After rescuing me from the sword he rescued me from the cold, not by sharing his cloak with me, like Saint Martin, but by giving it all to me; then from hunger by sharing with me — guess what?"

"A Strasbourg pie?" asked Beauchamp.

"No, his horse; of which we each of us ate a slice with a hearty appetite. It was very hard."

"The horse?" said Morcerf, laughing.

"No, the sacrifice," returned Château-Renaud; "ask Debray if he would sacrifice his English steed for a stranger?"

"Not for a stranger," said Debray; "but for a friend I might perhaps."

"I divined that you would become mine, Monsieur the

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Baron," replied Morrel; "besides, as I had the honor to tell you, heroism or not, sacrifice or not, that day I owed an offering to bad fortune in recompense for the favors good fortune had on other days granted to us."

"The history to which M. Morrel alludes," continued Château-Renaud, "is an admirable one, which he will tell you some day when you are better acquainted with him; to-day let us fill our stomachs and not our memories. What time do you breakfast, Albert?"

"At half-past ten."

"Precisely?" asked Debray, taking out his watch.

"Oh! you will give me five minutes' grace," replied Morcerf, "for I also expect a preserver."

"Of whom?"

"Of myself, to be sure!" cried Morcerf; "do you think I cannot be saved as well as any one else, and that there are only Arabs who cut off heads? Our breakfast is a philanthropic one, and we shall have at table — at least, I hope so — two benefactors of humanity."

"What shall we do?" said Debray; "we have only one Monthyon prize."

"Well, it will be given to some one who has done nothing to deserve it," said Beauchamp; "that is the way the Academy usually escapes from the dilemma."

"And where does he come from?" asked Debray. "You have already answered the question once, but so vaguely that I venture to put it a second time."

"Really," said Albert, "I do not know; when I invited him three months ago, he was then at Rome, but since that time, who knows where he may have gone?"

"And you think him capable of being here punctually?" demanded Debray.

"I think him capable of everything."

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"Well, with the five minutes' grace, we have only ten left."

"I will profit by them to tell you something about my guest."

"I beg pardon!" interrupted Beauchamp; "are there any materials for an article in what you are going to tell us?"

"Yes, and for a most curious one."

"Go on, then, for I see I shall not get to the Chamber this morning, and I must make up for it."

"I was at Rome during the last Carnival."

"We know that," said Beauchamp.

"Yes; but what you do not know is that I was carried off by bandits."

"There are no bandits," cried Debray.

"Yes, there are, and most hideous, or rather most admirable ones, for I found them ugly enough to frighten me."

"Come, my dear Albert," said Debray, "confess that your cook is behindhand, that the oysters have not arrived from Ostend or Marennes, and that, like Madame de Maintenon, you are going to replace the dish by a story. Say so at once; we are sufficiently well-bred to excuse you, and to listen to your story, fabulous as it promises to be."

"And I say to you that fabulous as it may seem, I give it to you as a true one from beginning to end. The brigands had carried me off and conducted me to a most gloomy spot, called the catacombs of St. Sebastian."

"I know it," said Château-Renaud; "I narrowly escaped catching a fever there."

"And I did more than that," replied Morcerf, "for I caught one. I was informed that I was a prisoner until I paid the sum of four thousand Roman crowns, — about twenty-four thousand livres. Unfortunately, I had not above fifteen hundred. I was at the end of my journey

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and of my credit. I wrote to Franz — and were he here he would confirm every word — I wrote to Franz that if he did not come with the four thousand crowns before six, at ten minutes past I should have gone to join the blessed saints and glorious martyrs in whose company I had the honor of being; and Signor Luigi Vampa — that was the name of the chief of these bandits — would have scrupulously kept his word."

"But Franz came with the four thousand crowns," said Château-Renaud. "The devil! A man whose name is Franz d'Épinay or Albert de Morcerf has n't much trouble to get four thousand crowns."

"No, he arrived accompanied simply by the guest I am going to present to you."

"Ah! this gentleman is a Hercules killing Cacus, a Perseus freeing Andromeda?"

"No, he is a man of about my own size."

"Armed to the teeth?"

"He had not even a knitting-needle."

"But he paid your ransom?"

"He said two words to the chief, and I was free."

"And they apologized to him for having carried you off?" said Beauchamp.

"Just so."

"Why, he is a second Ariosto."

"No; he is simply the Count of Monte Cristo."

"There is no Count of Monte Cristo," said Debray.

"I do not think there is," added Château-Renaud, with the air of a man who knows the whole of the European nobility perfectly. "Does any one know anything of a Count of Monte Cristo?"

"He comes possibly from the Holy Land, and one of his ancestors possessed Calvary, as the Montemarts did the Dead Sea."

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"I think I can assist your researches," said Maximilian. "Monte Cristo is a little island I have often heard spoken of by the old sailors my father employed, — a grain of sand in the centre of the Mediterranean, an atom in the infinite."

"Precisely!" cried Albert. "Well, he of whom I speak is the lord and master of this grain of sand, of this atom; he has purchased the title of count somewhere in Tuscany."

"He is rich, then?

"I believe so."

"But that ought to be visible."

"That is what deceives you, Debray."

"I do not understand you."

"Have you read the 'Arabian Nights'?"

"What a question!"

"Well, do you know if the persons you see there are rich or poor, if their grains of wheat are not rubies or diamonds? They seem like poor fishermen, and suddenly they open some mysterious cavern filled with the wealth of the Indies."

"Well?"

"My Count of Monte Cristo is one of those fishermen. He has even a name taken from the book; he calls himself Sinbad the Sailor, and has a cave filled with gold."

"And you have seen this cavern, Morcerf?" asked Beauchamp.

"No, but Franz has; for Heaven's sake, not a word of this before him! Franz went in with his eyes blindfolded, and was served by mutes and women to whom Cleopatra was nothing. Only he is not quite sure about the women, for they did not come in until after he had taken some hashish, so that what he took for women might have been simply a row of statues."

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The two young men looked at Morcerf as if to say, "Are you mad, or are you laughing at us?"

"And I also," said Morrel, thoughtfully, "have heard something like this from an old sailor named Penelon."

"Ah!" cried Albert, "it is very lucky that M. Morrel comes to aid me; you are vexed, are you not, that he thus gives a clew to the labyrinth?"

"My dear Albert," said Debray, "what you tell us is so extraordinary."

"Ah! because your ambassadors and your consuls do not tell you of them. They have no time; they must molest their countrymen who travel."

"Now you get angry, and attack our poor agents. How will you have them protect you? The Chamber cuts down their salaries every day, so that now they have scarcely any. Will you be ambassador, Albert? I will send you to Constantinople."

"No, lest on the first demonstration I make in favor of Mehemet Ali, the Sultan send me the bowstring, and make my secretaries strangle me."

"There, now!" said Debray.

"Yes, but this does not prevent the Count of Monte Cristo from existing."

"*Pardieu!* every one exists."

"Doubtless, but not in the same way; every one has not black slaves, superb galleys, arms like those at La Casauba, Arabian horses, and Greek mistresses."

"Have you seen the Greek mistress?"

"I have both seen and heard her. I saw her at the theatre, and heard her one morning when I breakfasted with the count."

"Your extraordinary man eats, then?"

"Yes; but so little, it can hardly be called eating."

"He must be a vampire."

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"Laugh if you will; that was the opinion of the Comtesse G——, who, as you are aware, knew Lord Ruthven."

"Ah, capital!" said Beauchamp. "For a man not connected with newspapers, here is the pendant to the famous sea-serpent of the 'Constitutionnel.'"

"Wild eyes, the iris of which contracts or dilates at pleasure," said Debray; "facial angle strongly developed; magnificent forehead; livid complexion; black beard; sharp and white teeth; politeness unexceptionable."

"Just so, Lucien," returned Morcerf; "you have described him, feature for feature. Yes, keen and cutting politeness. This man has often made me shudder! and one day when we were viewing an execution I thought I should faint, more from hearing the cold and calm manner in which he spoke of every description of torture than from the sight of the executioner and the culprit."

"Did he not conduct you to the ruins of the Colosseum to suck your blood?" asked Beauchamp.

"Or, after having delivered you, did he not make you sign a flame-colored parchment by which you yielded your soul to him, as Esau sold his birthright?"

"Rail on, rail on at your ease, gentlemen!" said Morcerf, somewhat piqued. "When I look at you Parisians, idlers on the Boulevard de Gand or the Bois de Boulogne, and think of this man, it seems to me we are not of the same race."

"I am highly flattered," returned Beauchamp.

"At the same time," added Château-Renaud, "your Count of Monte Cristo is a very fine fellow, always excepting his little arrangements with the Italian banditti."

"There are no Italian banditti!" said Debray.

"There are no vampires!" cried Beauchamp.

"There is no Count of Monte Cristo!" added Debray. "There is half-past ten striking, Albert!"

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"Confess you have dreamed this, and let us sit down to breakfast," continued Beauchamp. But the sound of the clock had not died away when Germain announced, "His Excellency the Count of Monte Cristo." The involuntary start every one gave proved how much Morcerf's narrative had impressed them, and Albert himself could not prevent himself from feeling a sudden emotion. He had not heard a carriage stop in the street, or steps in the ante-chamber; the door had itself opened noiselessly. The count appeared, dressed with the greatest simplicity; but the most fastidious dandy could have found nothing to cavil at in his toilet. Every article of dress — hat, coat, gloves, and boots — was from the first makers. He seemed scarcely five and thirty. But what struck everybody was his extreme resemblance to the portrait Debray had drawn. The count advanced, smiling, into the centre of the room, and approached Albert, who hastened towards him, holding out his hand. "Punctuality," said Monte Cristo, "is the politeness of kings, according to one of your sovereigns, I think; but it is not that of travellers, however they may wish. But I hope you will excuse the two or three seconds I am behindhand; five hundred leagues are not to be accomplished without some trouble, and especially in France, where it seems it is forbidden to beat the postilions."

"Monsieur the Count," replied Albert, "I was announcing your visit to some of my friends, whom I had invited in consequence of the promise you did me the honor to make, and whom I now present to you. They are M. le Comte de Château-Renaud, whose nobility goes back to the twelve peers, and whose ancestors had a place at the Round Table; M. Lucien Debray, private secretary to the Ministre de l'Intérieur; M. Beauchamp, an editor of a paper, and the terror of the French Government, but

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of whom, in spite of his celebrity, you have not heard in Italy, since his paper is prohibited there; and M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis."

At this name the count, who had hitherto saluted every one with courtesy, but at the same time with a coldness and formality quite English, made in spite of himself a step forward, and a slight tinge of red colored his pale cheeks. "You wear the uniform of the new French conquerors, Monsieur," said he; "it is a handsome uniform." No one could have said what caused the count's voice to vibrate so deeply, and what made his eye flash, which was in general so calm and so clear, when he had no motive for veiling its expression.

"You have never seen our Africans, Monsieur the Count?" said Albert.

"Never," replied the count, who was by this time perfectly master of himself again.

"Well, beneath this uniform beats one of the bravest and noblest hearts in the whole army."

"Oh, M. de Morcerf!" interrupted Morrel.

"Let me go on, Captain! And we have just heard," continued Albert, "of a recent action of Monsieur, and one so heroic that although I have seen him to-day for the first time, I request you to allow me to introduce him as my friend."

At these words it was still possible to remark in Monte Cristo that fixed gaze, that passing color, and that slight trembling of the eyelid which with him betrayed emotion.

"Ah! you have a noble heart?" said the count; "so much the better."

This exclamation, which answered to the count's own thought rather than to what Albert was saying, surprised everybody, and especially Morrel, who looked at Monte Cristo with surprise. But at the same time the intona-

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tion was so soft that however strange the exclamation might seem, it was impossible to be offended at it.

"Why, then, should he doubt it?" said Beauchamp to Château-Renaud.

"In fact," replied the latter, who with his aristocratic glance and his knowledge of the world had penetrated at once all that was penetrable in Monte Cristo, "Albert has not deceived us; the count is a singular being. What say you, Morrel?"

"*Ma foi!* he has an open look about him that pleases me, in spite of the singular remark he has made about me."

"Gentlemen," said Albert, "Germain informs me that breakfast is ready. My dear count, allow me to show you the way."

They passed silently into the breakfast-room; every one took his place.

"Gentlemen," said the count, seating himself, "permit me to make a confession which must form my excuse for any unconventionalities of which I may be guilty. I am a stranger, and a stranger to such a degree that this is the first time I have ever been in Paris. The French way of living is utterly unknown to me, and up to the present time I have followed the Eastern customs, which are entirely in contrast to the Parisian. I beg you, therefore, to excuse me if you find anything in me too Turkish, too Italian, or too Arabian. Now, then, gentlemen, let us breakfast."

"With what an air he says all this!" muttered Beauchamp; "decidedly he is a great man."

"A great man in his country," added Debray.

"A great man in every country, M. Debray," said Château-Renaud.

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CHAPTER X.

THE BREAKFAST.

The count was, it may be remembered, a most temperate guest. Albert remarked this, expressing his fears lest at the outset the Parisian mode of life should displease the traveller in the most essential point.

"My dear count," said he, "I fear that the fare of the Rue du Helder is not so much to your taste as that of the Place d'Espagne. I ought to have consulted you on the point, and have had some dishes prepared expressly to suit your taste."

"Did you know me better," returned the count, smiling, "you would not give one thought of such a thing for a traveller like myself, who has successively lived on macaroni at Naples, polenta at Milan, olla podrida at Valencia, pilau at Constantinople, karrick in India, and swallows' nests in China. I eat everywhere, and of everything, — only I eat but little; and this day, on which you reproach me for abstinence, is my day of appetite, for I have not eaten since yesterday morning."

"What!" cried all the guests, "you have not eaten for four and twenty hours?"

"No," replied the count; "I was forced to go out of my road to obtain some information near Nimes, so that I was somewhat late, and I did not choose to stop."

"And you ate in your carriage?" asked Morcerf.

"No; I slept, as I generally do when I am weary

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without having the courage to amuse myself, or when I am hungry without feeling inclined to eat."

"But you can sleep when you please, Monsieur?" said Morrel.

"Very nearly."

"You have a receipt for that?"

"An infallible one."

"That would be invaluable to us in Africa, who have not always food to eat, and rarely anything to drink."

"Yes," said Monte Cristo; "but unfortunately my receipt, excellent for a man like myself, who leads an exceptional life, would be very dangerous applied to an army, which might not awake when it was needed."

"May we inquire what is this receipt?" asked Debray.

"Oh, yes," returned Monte Cristo; "I make no secret of it. It is a mixture of excellent opium, which I brought myself from Canton in order to have it pure, and the best hashish which grows in the East, — that is, between the Tigris and the Euphrates. These two ingredients are mixed in equal proportions and formed into pills. Ten minutes after one is taken, the effect is produced. Ask M. le Baron Franz d'Épinay; I think he tasted them one day."

"Yes," replied Morcerf, "he said something about it to me."

"But," said Beauchamp, who in his capacity of journalist was very incredulous, "you always carry this drug about you?"

"Always."

"Would it be an indiscretion to ask to see those precious pills?" continued Beauchamp, hoping to take him at a disadvantage.

"No, Monsieur," returned the count; and he drew from his pocket a marvellous *bonbonnière*, formed out of

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a single emerald, and closed by a golden lid, which unscrewed and gave passage to a small ball of a greenish color, and about the size of a pea. This ball had an acrid and penetrating odor. There were four or five more in the emerald, which would contain about a dozen. The *bonbonnière* passed round the table; but it was more to examine the admirable emerald than to see the pills that the guests handed it around.

"And is it your cook who prepares these pills?" asked Beauchamp.

"Oh, no, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "I do not thus intrust my real enjoyments to the discretion of the incapable. I am a tolerable chemist, and prepare my pills myself."

"This is a magnificent emerald, and the largest I have ever seen," said Château-Renaud, "although my mother has some remarkable family jewels."

"I had three similar ones," returned Monte Cristo. "I gave one to the Grand Seigneur, who mounted it in his sabre; another to our Holy Father the Pope, who had it set in his tiara opposite to one nearly as large, though not so fine, given by the Emperor Napoleon to his predecessor, Pius VII. I kept the third for myself, and I had it hollowed out, which reduced its value, but rendered it more commodious for the purpose I intended it for."

Every one looked at Monte Cristo with astonishment; he spoke with so much simplicity that it was evident he spoke the truth or that he was mad. However, the sight of the emerald made them naturally incline to the former belief.

"And what did these two sovereigns give you in exchange for these magnificent presents?" asked Debray.

"The Grand Seigneur, the liberty of a woman," replied

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the count; "the Pope, the life of a man, — so that once in my life I have been as powerful as if Heaven had made me come into the world on the steps of a throne."

"And it was Peppino you saved, was it not?" cried Morcerf; "it was for him that you obtained pardon?"

"Perhaps," returned the count, smiling.

"Monsieur the Count, you have no idea what pleasure it gives me to hear you speak thus," said Morcerf. "I had announced you beforehand to my friends as an enchanter of the 'Arabian Nights,' a wizard of the Middle Ages; but the Parisians are so subtle in paradoxes that they mistake for caprices of the imagination the most incontestable truths, when these truths do not form a part of their daily existence. For example, here is Debray who reads, and Beauchamp who prints every day that a member of the Jockey Club has been stopped and robbed on the Boulevard; that four persons have been assassinated in the Rue St. Denis or the Faubourg St. Germain; that ten, fifteen, or twenty thieves have been arrested in a café on the Boulevard du Temple, or in the Thermes de Julien, — and who yet contest the existence of the bandits of the Maremma, of the Campagna di Romana, or the Pontine Marshes. Tell them yourself that I was taken by bandits, and that without your generous intercession I should now have been sleeping in the catacombs of St. Sebastian, instead of receiving them in my humble abode in the Rue du Helder."

"Bah," said Monte Cristo, "you promised me never to speak of that misfortune."

"It was not I who made that promise," cried Morcerf; "it must have been some one else whom you have rescued in the same manner, and whom you have forgotten. Pray speak of it, for if you decide to relate that event you will perhaps not only repeat a few things that I already know,

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but will also acquaint me with much of which I am still in ignorance."

"It seems to me," returned the count, smiling, "that you played a sufficiently important part to know as well as myself what happened."

"Well, you promise me, if I tell all I know, to relate in your turn all that I do not know?"

"That is but fair," replied Monte Cristo.

"Well," said Morcerf, "for three days I believed myself the object of the attentions of a mask whom I took for a descendant of Tullia or Poppœa, while I was simply the object of the attentions of a *contadine*, and I say *contadine* to avoid saying peasant. What I know is that like a fool, a greater fool than he of whom I spoke just now, I mistook for this peasant a young bandit of fifteen or sixteen, with a beardless chin and slim waist, and who just as I was about to imprint a chaste salute on his lips placed a pistol to my head, and aided by seven or eight others, led, or rather dragged me, to the catacombs of St. Sebastian, where I found a highly educated chief of brigands perusing 'Cæsar's Commentaries,' and who deigned to leave off reading to inform me that unless the next morning before six o'clock I should have contributed to his money-box four thousand piastres, at a quarter past six I should cease to exist. The letter is still to be seen, for it is in Franz d'Épinay's possession, signed by me, and with a postscript of M. Luigi Vampa. This is all I know; but I know not, Monsieur the Count, how you contrived to inspire with such respect the bandits of Rome, who respect so few. I assure you, Franz and I were lost in admiration."

"Nothing more simple," returned the count. "I had known the famous Vampa for more than ten years. When he was quite a child, and only a shepherd, I gave him,

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for having shown me the way to a place, some pieces of gold; he, in order to repay me, gave me a poniard, the hilt of which he had carved with his own hand, and which you may have seen in my collection of arms. In after years, whether he had forgotten this interchange of presents, which ought to have cemented our friendship, or whether he did not recollect me, he sought to take me; but on the contrary it was I who captured him and a dozen of his band. I might have handed him over to Roman justice, which is somewhat expeditious, and which would have been especially so with him; but I did nothing of the sort, — I suffered him and his band to depart."

"On the condition that they should sin no more," said Beauchamp, laughing. "I see with pleasure that they have scrupulously kept their word."

"No, Monsieur," returned Monte Cristo; "upon the simple condition that they should respect myself and my friends. Perhaps what I am about to say may seem strange to you who are socialists, and vaunt humanity and your duty to your neighbor; but I never seek to protect society, which does not protect me, and which I will even say generally occupies itself about me only to injure me; and thus while I give them a low place in my esteem, and preserve a neutrality towards them, it is society and my neighbor who are indebted to me."

"Bravo!" cried Château-Renaud; "you are the first man I ever met sufficiently courageous to preach egotism pure and simple. Bravo, Monsieur the Count, bravo!"

"It is frank, at least," said Morrel. "But I am sure that Monsieur the Count does not regret having once deviated from the principles he has so boldly avowed."

"How have I deviated from those principles, Monsieur?" asked Monte Cristo, who could not help looking at Morrel with so much intensity that two or three times the young

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man had been unable to sustain the clear and piercing eye of the count.

"Why, it seems to me," replied Morrel, "that in delivering M. de Morcerf, whom you did not know, you did good to your neighbor and to society."

"Of which he is the brightest ornament," said Beauchamp, drinking off a glass of champagne.

"Monsieur the Count," cried Morcerf, "you are at fault, — you, one of the most formidable logicians I know; and you must see it clearly proved that instead of being an egotist, you are a philanthropist. Ah! you call yourself Oriental, a Levantine, Maltese, Indian, Chinese; your family name is Monte Cristo; Sinbad the Sailor is your baptismal appellation; and yet the first day you set foot in Paris you instinctively possess the greatest virtue, or rather the chief defect of us eccentric Parisians, — that is, you assume the vices you have not, and conceal the virtues you possess."

"My dear viscount," returned Monte Cristo, "I do not see in all I have done anything that merits, either from you or these gentlemen, the pretended eulogies I have received. You are no stranger to me, for I was acquainted with you: I had given up two rooms to you; I had invited you to breakfast with me; I had lent you one of my carriages; we had witnessed the Carnival together; and we had also seen from a window of the Place del Popolo the execution that affected you so much that you nearly fainted. I will appeal to any of these gentlemen; could I leave my guest in the hands of a hideous bandit, as you term him? Besides, you know, I had the idea that you could introduce me into some of the Paris salons when I came to France. You have sometimes perhaps looked upon this resolution as a vague and fugitive project, but to-day you see it is a solid reality, to

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which you must submit under penalty of breaking your word."

"I will keep it," returned Morcerf; "but I fear that you will be much disappointed, accustomed as you are to picturesque events and fantastic horizons. Among us you will not meet with any of those episodes with which your adventurous existence has so familiarized you. Our Chimborazo is Montmartre; our Himalaya is Mount Valérien; our Great Desert is the Plain of Grenelle, where they are now boring an Artesian well to water the caravans. We have plenty of thieves, though not so many as reported; but these thieves stand in far more dread of a policeman than a lord. France is so prosaic, and Paris so civilized a city, that you will not find in its eighty-five departments — I say eighty-five, because I do not include Corsica — you will not find, then, in these eighty-five departments a single hill on which there is not a telegraph, or a grotto in which the commissary of police has not put up a gas-lamp. There is but one service I can render you, and for that I place myself entirely at your orders; that is, to present, or make my friends present you everywhere. Besides, you have no need of any one to introduce you, — with your name and your fortune and your talent" (Monte Cristo bowed with a somewhat ironical smile) "you can present yourself everywhere, and be well received. I can be useful in one way only: if knowledge of Parisian habits, of the means of rendering yourself comfortable, or of the bazaars, can assist, you may dispose of me to find you a suitable residence. I dare not offer to share my apartments with you as I shared yours at Rome — I, who do not profess egotism, but am yet egotistical *par excellence*, — for except myself, these rooms would not contain a shadow, unless it were the shadow of a woman."

"Ah," said the count, "that is a most conjugal reserva-

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tion; I recollect that at Rome you said something of a projected marriage. May I congratulate you?"

"The affair is still only a project."

"And he who says 'project' means certainty," said Debray.

"No," replied Morcerf, "my father is most anxious about it; and I hope ere long to introduce you, if not to my wife, at least to my intended, — Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars."

"Eugénie Danglars!" said Monte Cristo; "tell me, is not her father M. le Baron Danglars?"

"Yes," returned Morcerf; "a baron of recent creation."

"What matter," said Monte Cristo, "if he has rendered the State services which merit this distinction?"

"Enormous services," answered Beauchamp. "Although in reality a Liberal, he negotiated a loan of six millions for Charles X. in 1829, who made him a baron and chevalier of the Legion of Hbnor; so that he carries the ribbon, not, as you would think, in his waistcoat-pocket, but at his button-hole."

"Ah!" interrupted Morcerf, laughing, "Beauchamp, Beauchamp, keep that for the 'Charivari,' but spare my future father-in-law in my presence." Then, turning to Monte Cristo, "You just now pronounced his name as if you knew the baron?"

"I do not know him," returned Monte Cristo; "but I shall probably soon make his acquaintance, for I have a credit opened with him by the house of Richard and Blount of London, Arstein and Eskeles of Vienna, and Thomson and French at Rome."

As he pronounced the last two names the count glanced at Maximilian Morrel. If the stranger expected to produce an effect on Morrel he was not mistaken; Maximilian

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started as if he had received an electric shock. "Thomson and French!" said he; "do you know that house, Monsieur?"

"They are my bankers in the capital of the Christian world," returned the count, quietly. "Can my influence with them be of any service to you?"

"Oh, Monsieur the Count, you could assist me perhaps in researches which have been up to the present fruitless. That house in past years did ours a great service, and has, I know not for what reason, always denied having rendered us this service."

"I shall be at your orders," said Monte Cristo, inclining himself.

"But," continued Morcerf, "*à propos* of Danglars, we have strangely wandered from the subject. We were speaking of a suitable habitation for the Count of Monte Cristo. Come, gentlemen, let us all propose some place; where shall we lodge this new guest in our great capital?"

"Faubourg St. Germain," said Château-Renaud. "The count will find there a charming hotel, with a court and garden."

"Bah! Château-Renaud," returned Debray, "you know only your dull and gloomy Faubourg St. Germain. Do not pay any attention to him, Monsieur the Count; live in the Chaussée d'Antin, — that 's the real centre of Paris."

"Boulevard de l'Opéra," said Beauchamp; "on the first floor, a house with a balcony. Monsieur the Count will have his cushions of silver cloth brought there, and as he smokes his chibouque see all Paris pass before him."

"You have no idea, then, Morrel?" asked Château-Renaud; "you do not propose anything?"

"Oh, yes," returned the young man, smiling; "on the contrary, I have one; but I expected the count would be

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tempted by one of the brilliant proposals made him; yet as he has not replied to any of them I will venture to offer him a suite of apartments in a charming hotel, in the Pompadour style, that my sister has inhabited for a year, in the Rue Meslay."

"You have a sister?" asked the count.

"Yes, Monsieur, a most excellent sister."

"Married?"

"Nearly nine years."

"Happy?" asked the count again.

"As happy as it is permitted to a human creature to be," replied Maximilian. "She married the man she loved, who remained faithful to us in our fallen fortunes, — Emmanuel Herbaut." Monte Cristo smiled imperceptibly. "I live there during my leave of absence," continued Maximilian; "and I shall be, together with my brother-in-law Emmanuel, at the disposition of Monsieur the Count whenever he thinks fit to honor us."

"One minute!" cried Albert, without giving Monte Cristo the time to reply. "Take care; you are going to shut up a traveller, — Sinbad the Sailor, a man who comes to see Paris, — to the routine of family life. You are going to make a patriarch of him."

"Oh, no," said Morrel; "my sister is five and twenty, my brother-in-law is thirty. They are gay, young, and happy. Besides, Monsieur the Count will be in his own house, and only see them when he thinks fit to do so."

"Thanks, Monsieur," said Monte Cristo. "I shall content myself with being presented to your sister and her husband, if you will do me the honor to introduce me; but I cannot accept the offer of any one of these gentlemen, since my habitation is already prepared."

"What!" cried Morcerf; "you are then going to a hotel; that will be very dull for you."

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"Was I so badly lodged at Rome?" said Monte Cristo, smiling.

"*Parbleu!* at Rome you spent fifty thousand piastres in furnishing your apartments; but I presume that you are not disposed to spend a similar sum every day."

"It is not that which deterred me," replied Monte Cristo; "but as I determined to have a house to myself, I sent on my *valet de chambre*, and he ought by this time to have bought the house and furnished it."

"But you have, then, a *valet de chambre* who knows Paris?" said Beauchamp.

"It is the first time he has ever been in Paris. He is black, and cannot speak," returned Monte Cristo.

"It is Ali!" cried Albert, in the midst of the general surprise.

"Yes; Ali himself, my Nubian mute, whom you saw, I think, at Rome."

"Certainly," said Morcerf; "I recollect him perfectly. But how could you charge a Nubian to purchase a house, and a mute to furnish it? he will have done everything wrong, poor fellow."

"Undeceive yourself, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "I am quite sure that on the contrary he will have chosen everything as I wish. He knows my tastes, my caprices, my wants; he has been here a week, with the instinct of a hound, hunting by himself; he will have arranged everything to suit me. He knew I should arrive to-day at ten o'clock; since nine he awaited me at the Barrière de Fontainbleau. He gave me this paper; it contains the number of my new abode. Read it yourself," and Monte Cristo passed a paper to Albert.

"Ah, that is really original," said Beauchamp.

"And very princely," added Château-Renaud.

"What! do you not know your house?" asked Debray.

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"No," said Monte Cristo; "I told you I did not wish to be behind my time; I dressed myself in the carriage, and descended at the viscount's door."

The young men looked at each other. They did not know whether it was a comedy Monte Cristo was playing, but every word he uttered had such an air of simplicity that it was impossible to suppose that what he said was false; besides, why should he tell a falsehood?

"We must content ourselves, then," said Beauchamp, "with rendering Monsieur the Count all the little services in our power. I, in my quality of journalist, open all the theatres to him."

"Thanks, Monsieur," returned Monte Cristo; "my steward has orders to take a box at each theatre."

"Is your steward also a Nubian?" asked Debray.

"No, he is a countryman of yours, if a Corsican is a countryman of any one's. But you know him, M. de Morcerf."

"Is it that excellent M. Bertuccio, who understands hiring windows so well?"

"Yes; you saw him the day I had the honor of receiving you. He has been a soldier, a smuggler, — in fact, everything. I would not be quite sure that he has not been involved with the police for some trifle, — a stab with a knife, for instance."

"And you have chosen this honest citizen for your steward," said Debray. "Of how much does he rob you every year?"

"On my word," replied the count, "not more than another, I am sure. He answers my purpose, knows no impossibility, and so I keep him."

"Then," continued Château-Renaud, "since you have an establishment, a steward, and a hotel in the Champs Élysées, you want nothing more but a mistress."

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Albert smiled. He thought of the fair Greek he had seen in the count's box at the Argentina and Valle theatres.

"I have something better than that," said Monte Cristo; "I have a slave. You procure your mistresses from the Opera, the Vaudeville, or the Variétés; I purchased mine at Constantinople. It cost me more, but I have nothing to fear."

"But you forget," replied Debray, laughing, "that we are Franks by name and frank by nature, as King Charles said; and that the moment she puts her foot in France your slave becomes free."

"Who will tell her?"

"The first person who sees her."

"She speaks only Romaic."

"That is another thing."

"But at least we shall see her," said Beauchamp; "or do you keep eunuchs as well as mutes?"

"Oh, no," replied Monte Cristo; "I do not carry Orientalism so far. Every one about me is free to quit me, and when he leaves me will no longer have any need of me or any one else; it is for that reason, perhaps, that they do not quit me."

They had long since passed to dessert and cigars.

"My dear Albert," said Debray, rising, "it is half-past two. Your guest is charming; but there is no company so good but that one must leave it, and sometimes for bad company. I must return to the minister's. I will tell him of the count, and we shall soon know who he is."

"Take care," returned Albert; "no one has been able to accomplish that."

"Oh, we have three millions for our police. It is true they are almost always spent beforehand; but no matter, we shall still have fifty thousand livres to spend for this purpose."

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"And when you know, will you tell me?"

"I promise you. *Au revoir*, Albert. Gentlemen, good-morning."

As he left the room, Debray called out loudly, "My carriage!"

"Bravo!" said Beauchamp to Albert; "I shall not go to the Chamber, but I have something better to offer my readers than a speech of M. Danglars."

"For Heaven's sake, Beauchamp," returned Morcerf, "not a word, I beg of you; do not deprive me of the merit of introducing him and explaining him. Is he not peculiar?"

"He is more than that," replied Château-Renaud; "he is one of the most extraordinary men I ever saw in my life. Are you coming, Morrel?"

"As soon as I have given my card to Monsieur the Count, who has promised to pay us a visit at Rue Meslay, No. 14."

"Be sure I shall not fail to do so," returned the count, bowing. And Maximilian Morrel left the room with the Baron de Château-Renaud, leaving Monte Cristo alone with Morcerf.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE PRESENTATION.

When Albert found himself alone with Monte Cristo, "Monsieur the Count," said he, "allow me to commence my ciceroneship by showing you a specimen of a bachelor's apartments. You, who are accustomed to the palaces of Italy, can amuse yourself by calculating in how many square feet a young man who is not the worst lodged in Paris can live. As we pass from one room to another, I will open the windows to let you breathe."

Monte Cristo had already seen the breakfast-room and the salon on the ground-floor. Albert led him first to his studio, which was, as we have said, his favorite apartment. Monte Cristo was a worthy appreciator of all that Albert had collected here; old cabinets, Japan porcelain, Oriental stuffs, Venice glass, arms from all parts of the world, — everything was familiar to him, and at the first glance he recognized their date, their country, and their origin. Morcerf had expected he should be the guide; on the contrary, it was he who under the count's guidance followed a course of archæology, mineralogy, and natural history. They descended to the first floor; Albert led his guest into the salon. The salon was filled with the works of modern artists; there were landscapes by Dupré, with their long reeds and tall trees, their lowing oxen and marvellous skies; Delacroix's Arabian cavaliers, with their long white burnooses, their shining belts, their damaskeened arms, their horses, who tore each other with their teeth

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while their riders contended fiercely with their maces; *aquarelles* of Boulanger, representing Notre Dame de Paris with that vigor that makes the artist the rival of the poet; there were paintings by Dias, who makes his flowers more beautiful than flowers, his suns more brilliant than the sun; designs by Decamps, as vividly colored as those of Salvator Rosa, but more poetic; pastels by Giraud and Müller, representing children like angels, and women with the features of virgins; sketches torn from the album of Dauzat's "Travels in the East," that had been made in a few seconds on the saddle of a camel, or beneath the dome of a mosque, — in a word, all that modern art can give in exchange and as recompense for the art lost and gone with ages long since past.

Albert expected to have something new this time to show to the traveller, but to his great surprise the latter, without seeking for the signatures, many of which indeed were only initials, named instantly the author of every picture in such a manner that it was easy to see that each name was not only known to him, but that the style of each had been appreciated and studied by him. From the salon they passed into the bedchamber; it was a model of taste and simple elegance. A single portrait, signed "Léopold Robert," shone in its carved and gilded frame. This portrait attracted the Count of Monte Cristo's attention, for he made three rapid steps in the chamber, and stopped suddenly before it. It was the portrait of a young woman twenty-five or twenty-six years old, with a dark complexion, and light and lustrous eyes, veiled beneath their long lashes. She wore the picturesque costume of the Catalan fisherwomen, — a red and black bodice, and the golden pins in her hair. She was looking at the sea, and her shadow was defined on the blue ocean and sky. The light was so faint in the room that Albert did

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not perceive the paleness that spread itself over the count's visage, or the nervous heaving of his chest and shoulders. Silence prevailed for an instant, during which Monte Cristo gazed intently on the picture.

"You have there a most charming mistress, Viscount," said the count, in a perfectly calm tone; "and this costume — a ball costume, doubtless — becomes her most admirably."

"Ah, Monsieur!" returned Albert, "I would never forgive you this mistake if you had seen another picture beside this. You do not know my mother. She it is whom you see here; she had her portrait painted thus six or eight years ago. This costume is a fancy one, it appears, and the resemblance is so great that I think I still see my mother the same as she was in 1830. The countess had this portrait painted during the count's absence. She doubtless intended giving him an agreeable surprise; but strange to say, this portrait seemed to displease my father, and the value of the picture, which is, as you see, one of the best works of Léopold Robert, could not overcome his dislike to it. It is true, between ourselves, that M. de Morcerf is one of the most assiduous peers at the Luxembourg, a general renowned for theory, but a most mediocre amateur of art. It is different with my mother, who paints exceedingly well, and who, unwilling to part with so valuable a picture, gave it to me to put here, where it would be less likely to displease M. de Morcerf, whose portrait, by Gros, I will also show you. Excuse my talking of family matters; but as I shall have the honor of introducing you to the count, I tell you this to prevent your making any allusions to this picture. The picture seems to have a malign influence, for my mother rarely comes here without looking at it, and still more rarely does she look at it without weeping. This disagreement

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is the only one that has ever taken place between the count and countess, who are still as much united, although married more than twenty years, as on the day of their wedding."

Monte Cristo glanced rapidly at Albert as if to seek a hidden meaning in his words; but it was evident the young man uttered them in the simplicity of his heart.

"Now," said Albert, "that you have seen all my treasures, allow me to offer them to you, unworthy as they are. Consider yourself as in your own house; and to put yourself still more at your ease, pray accompany me to the apartments of M. de Morcerf, to whom I wrote from Rome an account of the services you rendered me, and to whom I announced your promised visit. And I may say that both the count and countess anxiously desire to thank you in person. You are somewhat *blasé*, I know; and family scenes have not much effect on Sinbad the Sailor, who has seen so many others. However, accept what I propose to you as an initiation into Parisian life, — a life of politeness, visiting, and introductions."

Monte Cristo bowed without making any answer; he accepted the offer without enthusiasm and without regret, as one of those conventions of society which every gentleman looks upon as a duty. Albert summoned his servant and ordered him to acquaint Monsieur and Madame de Morcerf of the arrival of the Count of Monte Cristo. Albert followed him with the count. When they arrived at the ante-chamber, above the door was visible a shield, which by its rich ornaments and its harmony with the rest of the furniture indicated the importance the owner attached to this blazon. Monte Cristo stopped and examined it attentively.

"Azure seven merlets, or, placed bender," said he. "These are doubtless your family arms? Except for the

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knowledge of blazons, that enables me to decipher them, I am very ignorant of heraldry, — I, a count of a fresh creation, fabricated in Tuscany by the aid of a commandery of Saint Stephen, and who would not have taken the trouble had I not been told that when you travel much it is necessary. Besides, you must have something on the panels of your carriage to escape being searched by the custom-house officers. Excuse my putting such a question to you."

"It is not indiscreet," returned Morcerf, with the simplicity of conviction. "You have guessed rightly. These are our arms, — that is, those of my father; but they are, as you see, joined to another shield, which has gules, a silver tower, which are my mother's. By her side I am Spanish; but the family of Morcerf is French, and I have heard, one of the oldest of the south of France."

"Yes," replied Monte Cristo, "these blazons prove that; almost all the armed pilgrims that went to the Holy Land took for their arms either a cross, in honor of their mission, or birds of passage, in sign of the long voyage they were about to undertake, and which they hoped to accomplish on the wings of faith. One of your ancestors had joined the Crusades; and supposing it to be only that of Saint Louis, that makes you mount to the thirteenth century, which is tolerably ancient."

"It is possible," said Morcerf; "my father has in his study a genealogical tree which will tell you all that, and on which I made commentaries that would have greatly edified Hozier and Jaucourt. At present I no longer think of it; and yet I must tell you that we are beginning to occupy ourselves greatly with these things under our popular Government."

"Well, then, your Government would do well to choose from the past something better than the things that I have

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noticed on your monuments, and which have no heraldic meaning whatever. As for you, Viscount," continued Monte Cristo to Morcerf, "you are more fortunate than the Government, for your arms are really beautiful, and speak to the imagination. Yes, you are at once from Provence and Spain; that explains, if the portrait you showed me be like, the dark hue I so much admired on the visage of the noble Catalane."

It would have required the penetration of Œdipus or the Sphinx to have divined the irony the count concealed beneath these words, apparently uttered with the greatest politeness. Morcerf thanked him with a smile, and pushed open the door above which were his arms, and which, as we have said, opened into the salon. In the most conspicuous part of the salon was another portrait. It was that of a man from thirty-five to thirty-eight years old, in the uniform of a general officer, wearing the double epaulette of gold and silver that indicates superior rank; the ribbon of the Legion of Honor round his neck, which showed he was a commander; and on the breast, on the right, the star of a grand officer of the order of the Saviour; and on the left that of the grand cross of Charles III., which proved that the person represented by the picture had served in the wars of Greece and Spain, or, what was just the same thing as regarded decorations, had fulfilled some diplomatic mission in the two countries.

Monte Cristo was engaged in examining this portrait with no less care than he had bestowed upon the other, when another door opened and he found himself in the presence of the Comte de Morcerf himself. He was a man of forty to forty-five years; but he seemed at least fifty, and his black mustache and eyebrows contrasted strangely with his almost white hair, which was cut short in the military fashion. He was dressed in plain clothes

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and wore at his button-hole the ribbons of the different orders to which he belonged. This man entered with a tolerably dignified step and with a species of haste. Monte Cristo saw him advance towards him without making a single step. It seemed as if his feet were fixed to the ground as his gaze was fixed on the Comte de Morcerf.

"Father," said the young man, "I have the honor of presenting to you M. le Comte de Monte Cristo, the generous friend whom I had the good fortune to meet in the critical juncture of which I have told you."

"You are most welcome, Monsieur," said the Comte de Morcerf, saluting Monte Cristo with a smile; "and Monsieur has rendered our house, in preserving its only heir, a service which insures him our eternal gratitude."

As he said these words, the Comte de Morcerf pointed to a chair, while he seated himself in another opposite the window. Monte Cristo, while he took the seat Morcerf offered him, placed himself in such a manner as to remain concealed in the shadow of the large velvet curtains, and there he read on the careworn and livid features of the count a whole history of secret griefs written in each wrinkle planted by time.

"Madame the Countess," said Morcerf, "was at her toilet when she was informed of the visit she was about to receive. She will however be in the salon in ten minutes."

"It is a great honor for me," returned Monte Cristo, "to be thus, on the first day of my arrival in Paris, brought in contact with a man whose merit equals his reputation, and to whom fortune has for once been equitable; but has she not still on the plains of Mitidja, or in the mountains of Atlas, a marshal's staff to offer you?"

"Oh," replied Morcerf, reddening slightly, "I have left

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the service, Monsieur. Made a peer at the Restoration, I served through the first campaign under the orders of Maréchal Bourmont. I could therefore expect a higher rank; and who knows what might have happened had the elder branch remained on the throne? But the Revolution of July was, it seems, sufficiently glorious to allow itself to be ungrateful; and it was so for all services that did not date from the imperial period. I tendered my resignation; for when you have gained your epaulettes on the battle-field, you do not know how to manœuvre on the slippery ground of the salons. I have hung up my sword and cast myself into politics. I have devoted myself to industry; I study the useful arts. During the twenty years I served, I often wished to do so, but I had not the time."

"These are the ideas that render your nation superior to any other," returned Monte Cristo. "A gentleman of high birth, possessor of an ample fortune, you have consented to gain your promotion as an obscure soldier, step by step, — this is uncommon; then become general, peer of France, commander of the Legion of Honor, you consent to begin a second apprenticeship, without any other hope or any other desire than that of one day becoming useful to your fellow-creatures, — this indeed is praiseworthy, nay, more, it is sublime."

Albert looked on and listened with astonishment; he was not used to see Monte Cristo give vent to such bursts of enthusiasm.

"Alas!" continued the stranger, doubtless to dispel the slight cloud that covered Morcerf's brow, "we do not act thus in Italy; we grow according to our race and our species, and we pursue the same lines, and often the same uselessness all our lives."

"But, Monsieur," said the Comte de Morcerf, "for a

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man of your merit, Italy is not a country, and France opens her arms to receive you; respond to her call. France will not perhaps be ungrateful to all the world; she treats her children ill, but she always welcomes strangers."

"Ah, Father!" said Albert, with a smile, "it is evident you do not know M. le Comte de Monte Cristo; he despises all honors, and contents himself with those that are written on his passport."

"That is the most just remark," replied the stranger, "I ever heard made concerning myself!"

"You have been free to choose your career," observed the Comte de Morcerf, with a sigh; "and you have chosen the path strewed with flowers."

"Precisely, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo, with one of those smiles that a painter could never represent nor a physiologist analyze.

"If I did not fear to fatigue you," said the general, evidently charmed with the count's manners, "I would have taken you to the Chamber; there is to-day a debate which would be very interesting to those who are strangers to our modern senators."

"I shall be most grateful, Monsieur, if you will at some future time renew your offer; but I have been flattered with the hope of being presented to the countess, and I will therefore wait."

"Ah! here is my mother," cried the viscount.

Monte Cristo turned round hastily and saw Madame de Morcerf at the entrance of the salon, at the door opposite to that by which her husband had entered, pale and motionless; when Monte Cristo turned round, she let fall her arm, which for some unknown reason had been resting on the gilded door-post. She had been there some moments and had overheard the last words of the visitor. The lat-

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"Monte Cristo turned round hastily and saw Madame de Morcerf at the entrance of the salon."

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ter rose and bowed to the countess, who inclined herself without speaking.

"Ah! good heavens, Madame!" said the count, "are you unwell, or is it the heat of the room that affects you?"

"Are you ill, Mother?" cried the viscount, springing towards Mercédès.

She thanked them both with a smile. "No," returned she; "but I feel some emotion on seeing for the first time the man without whose intervention we should have been in tears and desolation. Monsieur," continued the countess, advancing with the majesty of a queen, "I owe to you the life of my son, and for this I bless you. Now I thank you for the pleasure you give me in thus affording me the opportunity of thanking you as I have blessed you, from the bottom of my heart."

The count bowed again, but lower than before; he was even paler than Mercédès. "Madame," said he, "Monsieur the Count and yourself recompense too generously a simple action. To save a man, to spare a father's feelings or a mother's sensibility, is not to do a good action, but a simple deed of humanity."

At these words, uttered with the most exquisite sweetness and politeness, Madame de Morcerf replied, "It is very fortunate for my son, Monsieur, that he found such a friend, and I thank God who has brought these things to pass." And Mercédès raised her fine eyes to heaven with so fervent an expression of gratitude that the count fancied he saw tears in them. M. de Morcerf approached her.

"Madame," said he, "I have already made my excuses to Monsieur the Count for quitting him, and I pray you renew them. The sitting commences at two; it is now three, and I am to speak."

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"Go, then, and I will endeavor to make our guest forget your absence!" replied the countess, with the same tone of deep feeling. "Monsieur the Count," continued she, turning to Monte Cristo, "will you do us the honor of passing the rest of the day with us?"

"Believe me, Madame, I feel most grateful for your kindness, but I came to your door this morning in my travelling-carriage. How I am established in Paris I do not yet know, and hardly know where, — a trivial matter, I admit, but causing me some inquietude."

"At least, we shall have this pleasure another time," said the countess; "you promise that?"

Monte Cristo inclined himself without answering; but the gesture might pass for assent.

"I will not detain you, Monsieur," continued the countess; "I would not have our gratitude become indiscreet or importunate."

"My dear count," said Albert, "I will endeavor to return your politeness at Rome, and place my coupé at your disposal until you have had time to provide yourself with carriages."

"A thousand thanks for your kindness, Viscount," returned the Count of Monte Cristo; "but I suppose that M. Bertuccio has suitably employed the four hours and a half I have given him, and that I shall find a carriage of some sort ready at the door."

Albert was used to the count's manner of proceeding; he knew that like Nero he was in search of the impossible. Nothing, now, that the count might do could surprise him; but wishing to judge with his own eyes how far the count's orders had been executed, he accompanied him to the door of the hotel. Monte Cristo was not deceived. As soon as he appeared in the Comte de Morcerf's ante-chamber, a footman, the same who at Rome had

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brought the count's card to the two young men and announced his visit, sprang into the vestibule, and when he arrived at the door the illustrious traveller found his carriage awaiting him. It was a coupé of Koller's building, and with horses and harness for which Drake had, to the knowledge of all the lions of Paris, refused on the previous day eighteen thousand livres.

"Monsieur," said the count to Albert, "I do not ask you to accompany me to my house, as I can only show you a habitation fitted up in a hurry, and I have, as you know, a reputation to keep up for impromptu achievements. Give me, therefore, one more day before I invite you; I shall then be certain not to fail in my hospitality."

"If you ask me for a day, Count, I know what to anticipate; it will not be a house I shall see, but a palace. You have decidedly some *génie* at your control."

"Good! spread that idea," replied Monte Cristo, putting his foot on the velvet-lined steps of his splendid carriage, "and that will be worth something to me among the ladies."

As he spoke he sprang into the vehicle, the door was closed, and he started off at a gallop, but not so rapidly but that he could notice the almost imperceptible movement which stirred the curtains of the apartment in which he had left Madame de Morcerf.

When Albert returned to his mother, he found her in the boudoir, reclining in a large velvet armchair, — the whole room so obscure that only the shining spangle, fastened here and there to the drapery, and the angles of the gilded frames of the pictures, gave a kind of light to the room. Albert could not see the countenance of the countess, which was lost in a thin veil she had put on her head, and which descended around her features like a cloud of vapor; but it seemed to him as though her voice

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had altered. He could distinguish amid the perfumes of the roses and heliotropes in the flower-stands the sharp and fragrant odor of volatile salts, and he remarked in one of the chased cups on the mantel-piece the countess's smelling-bottle, taken from its shagreen case; and he exclaimed in a tone of uneasiness as he entered, "My dear mother, have you been unwell during my absence?"

"No, no, Albert! but you know these roses, tuberoses, and orange-flowers throw out at first, before one is used to them, such violent perfumes."

"Then, my dear mother," said Albert, putting his hand to the bell, "they must be taken into the ante-chamber. You are really unwell; just now, when you came into the room, you were very pale."

"Was I pale, Albert?"

"Yes; a paleness that suits you admirably, Mother, but which did not the less alarm my father and myself!"

"Did your father speak of it?" inquired Mercédès, eagerly.

"No, Madame; but do you not remember that he remarked the fact to you?"

"Yes, I do remember," replied the countess.

A servant entered, summoned by Albert's ring of the bell.

"Take these flowers into the ante-room or dressing-room," said the viscount. "They make the countess unwell."

The footman obeyed his orders. A long pause ensued, which lasted until all the flowers were removed. "What is this name of Monte Cristo?" inquired the countess, when the servant had taken away the last vase of flowers. "Is it a family name, or the name of the estate, or a simple title?"

"I believe, Mother, it is merely a title. The count

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purchased an island in the Tuscan Archipelago, and, as he told you to-day, has founded a commandery. You know the same thing was done for Saint Stephen of Florence, Saint George Constantinian of Parma, and even for the order of Malta. Except this, he has no pretension to nobility, and calls himself a chance count, although the general opinion at Rome is that the count is a man of very high distinction."

"His manners are admirable," said the countess; "at least, as far as I could judge in the few moments he remained here."

"They are perfect, Mother; so perfect that they surpass by far all I have known in the leading aristocracy of the three proudest nobilities of Europe, — the English, Spanish, and German."

The countess reflected a moment; then, after a slight hesitation, she said, "You have seen, my dear Albert, — I ask the question as a mother, — you have seen M. de Monte Cristo in his house; you are quick-sighted, have much knowledge of the world, more tact than is usual at your age, — do you think the count is really what he appears to be?"

"What does he appear to be?"

"Why, you have just said, — a man of high distinction."

"I told you, my dear mother, he was esteemed such."

"But what is your own opinion, Albert?"

"I must tell you that I have not come to any decided opinion respecting him, but I think him a Maltese."

"I do not ask you of his origin, but what he is."

"Ah! what he is; that is quite another thing. I have seen so many remarkable things in connection with him that if you would have me really say what I think, I shall reply that I really do look upon him as one of Byron's heroes, whom misery has marked with a fatal brand, —

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some Manfred, some Lara, some Werner, one of those relics, in short, of some ancient family, who, disinherited of their patrimony, have achieved fortune by the force of their adventurous genius, which has placed them above the laws of society."

"You say — "

"I say that Monte Cristo is an island in the midst of the Mediterranean, without inhabitants or garrison, — the resort of smugglers of all nations, and pirates of every flag. Who knows whether or not these industrious worthies do not pay to their feudal lord some dues for his protection?"

"That is possible," said the countess, reflecting.

"Never mind," continued the young man; "smuggler or not, you must agree, Mother dear, as you have seen him, that the Count of Monte Cristo is a remarkable man, who will have the greatest success in the salons of Paris. Why, this very morning, at my abode, he began his entrance into society by striking every man of us with amazement, not even excepting Château-Renaud!"

"And what do you suppose is the count's age?" inquired Mercédès, evidently attaching great importance to this question.

"Thirty-five or thirty-six, Mother."

"So young! it is impossible," said Mercédès, replying at the same time to what Albert said as well as to her own private reflection.

"It is the truth, however. Three or four times he has said to me, and certainly without the slightest premeditation: At such a period I was five years old, at another ten years old, at another twelve; and I, induced by curiosity which kept me alive at these details, have compared the dates, and never found him inaccurate. The age of this singular man, who is of no age, is then, I am certain, thirty-five. Besides, Mother, remark how vivid his eye,

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how raven-black his hair; and his brow, though so pale, is free from wrinkles, — he is not only vigorous, but also young."

The countess bent her head as if beneath a heavy wave of bitter thoughts. "And has this man displayed a friendship for you, Albert?" she asked with a nervous shudder.

"I am inclined to think so."

"And — do — you — like — him?"

"Why, he pleases me in spite of Franz d'Épinay, who tries to convince me that he is a being returned from the other world."

The countess shuddered. "Albert," she said in a voice which was altered by emotion, "I have always put you on your guard against new acquaintances. Now you are a man, and are able to give me advice; yet I repeat to you, Albert, be prudent."

"Why, my dear mother, it is necessary in order to make your advice practicable that I should know beforehand what I have to distrust. The count never plays; he only drinks pure water tinged with a little sherry, and is so rich that he cannot, without intending to laugh at me, try to borrow money. What, then, have I to fear from him?"

"You are right," said the countess; "and my fears are weakness, especially when directed against a man who has saved your life. How did your father receive him, Albert? It is necessary that we should be more than complaisant to the count. M. de Morcerf is sometimes preoccupied, — his affairs make him anxious; and he might, without intending it —"

"Nothing could be in better taste than my father's demeanor, Madame," said Albert; "nay, more, he seemed greatly flattered at two or three compliments which the

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count very skilfully and agreeably paid him with as much ease as if he had known him these thirty years. Each of these little tickling arrows must have pleased my father," added Albert, with a laugh. "And thus they parted the best possible friends; and M. de Morcerf even wished to take him to the Chamber to hear the speakers."

The countess made no reply. She fell into so deep a revery that her eyes gradually closed. The young man, standing up before her, gazed upon her with that filial affection which is more tender and endearing with children whose mothers are still young and handsome. Then, after seeing her eyes closed, and hearing her breathe gently, he believed she had dropped asleep, and left the apartment on tiptoe, closing the door after him with the utmost precaution. "This devil of a fellow!" he muttered, shaking his head; "I said at the time he would create a sensation here, and I measure his effect by an infallible thermometer. My mother has noticed him, and he must therefore perforce be remarkable." He went down to the stables, not without some slight annoyance when he remembered that the Count of Monte Cristo had laid his hands on a "turnout" which sent his bays down to number two in the opinion of connoisseurs. "Most decidedly," said he, "men are not equal; I must beg my father to develop this subject in the Chamber of Peers."

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CHAPTER XII.

MONSIEUR BERTUCCIO.

During this time the count had arrived at his house. It had taken him six minutes to perform the distance; but these six minutes were sufficient to induce twenty young men who knew the price of the equipage they had been unable to purchase themselves, to put their horses to a gallop in order to see the rich foreigner who could afford to give ten thousand livres apiece for his horses. The house Ali had chosen, and which was to serve as a town residence to Monte Cristo, was situated on the right hand as you ascend the Champs Élysées. A thick clump of trees and shrubs rose in the centre, and masked a portion of the front; around this shrubbery two alleys, like two arms, extended right and left, and formed a carriage-drive from the iron gates to a double portico, on every step of which stood a porcelain vase filled with flowers. This house, isolated from the rest, had besides the main entrance another in the Rue Ponthieu. Even before the coachman had hailed the *concierge*, the massy gates rolled on their hinges; they had seen the count coming, and at Paris, as everywhere else, he was served with the rapidity of lightning. The coachman entered and descended the half-circle without slackening his speed, and the gates were closed ere the wheels had ceased to sound on the gravel. The carriage stopped at the left side of the portico; two men presented themselves at the carriage-window. The one was Ali, who, smiling with an expression of the

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most sincere joy, seemed amply repaid by a mere look from Monte Cristo; the other bowed respectfully, and offered his arm to assist the count in descending.

"Thanks, M. Bertuccio," said the count, lightly springing up the three steps of the portico; "and the notary?"

"He is in the small salon, Excellency," returned Bertuccio.

"And the cards I ordered to be engraved as soon as you knew the number of the house?"

"Monsieur the Count, it is done already. I have been myself to the best engraver of the Palais-Royal, who did the plate in my presence. The first card struck off was taken, according to your orders, to M. le Baron Danglars, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, No. 7; the others are on the mantel-piece of your Excellency's bedroom."

"Good; what o'clock is it?"

"Four o'clock."

Monte Cristo gave his hat, cane, and gloves to the same French footman who had called his carriage at the Comte de Morcerf's, and then he passed into the small salon, preceded by Bertuccio, who showed him the way.

"These are but indifferent marbles in this ante-chamber," said Monte Cristo. "I trust they all will soon be taken away."

Bertuccio bowed. As the steward had said, the notary awaited the count in the small salon. He was a simple-looking lawyer's clerk, elevated to the extraordinary dignity of a provincial scrivener.

"You are the notary empowered to sell the country-house that I wish to purchase, Monsieur?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Yes, Monsieur the Count," returned the notary.

"Is the deed of sale ready?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Count."

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"Have you brought it?"

"Here it is."

"Very well; and where is this house that I purchase?" asked the count, carelessly, addressing himself half to Bertuccio, half to the notary. The steward made a gesture that signified, "I do not know." The notary looked at the count with astonishment. "What!" said he, "does not Monsieur the Count know where the house he purchases is situated?"

"No," returned the count.

"Monsieur the Count does not know it?"

"How should I know it? I have arrived from Cadiz this morning. I have never before been at Paris; and it is the first time I have ever even set my foot in France!"

"Ah! that is different; the house you purchase is situated at Auteuil." At these words Bertuccio turned pale.

"And where is Auteuil?" asked the count.

"Two steps from here, Monsieur," replied the notary; "a little beyond Passy, — a charming situation, in the heart of the Bois de Boulogne."

"So near as that?" said the count; "but that is not in the country. What made you choose a house at the gates of Paris, M. Bertuccio?"

"I!" cried the steward, with a strange expression. "Monsieur the Count did not charge me to purchase this house. If Monsieur the Count will recollect — if he will think — "

"Ah, true," observed Monte Cristo; "I recollect now. I read the advertisement in one of the papers, and was tempted by the false title, 'a country-house.'"

"It is not yet too late," cried Bertuccio, eagerly; "and if your Excellency will intrust me with the commission, I will find you a better at Enghien, at Fontenay aux Roses, or at Bellevue."

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"Oh, no," returned Monte Cristo, negligently; "since I have this, I will keep it."

"And you are quite right," said the notary, who feared to lose his fee. "It is a charming place, — running water, fine trees, a comfortable habitation, although abandoned for a long time, without reckoning the furniture, which, although old, is yet valuable now that old things are so much sought after. I suppose Monsieur the Count has the tastes of the day?"

"To be sure," returned Monte Cristo; "it is very convenient, then?"

"It is more, — it is magnificent."

"*Peste!* let us not lose such an opportunity," returned Monte Cristo. "The deed, if you please, Monsieur the Notary." And he signed it rapidly, after having first run his eye over that part of the deed in which were specified the situation of the house and the names of the proprietors. "Bertuccio," said he, "give fifty-five thousand livres to Monsieur." The steward left the room with a faltering step, and returned with a bundle of bank-notes, which the notary counted like a man who never gives a receipt for money until after legal examination.

"And now," demanded the count, "are all the forms complied with?"

"All, Monsieur the Count."

"Have you the keys?"

"They are in the hands of the *concierge*, who takes care of the house; but here is the order which I have written him to install Monsieur the Count in his new possession."

"Very well;" and Monte Cristo made a sign with his hand to the notary, which said, "I have no further need of you; you may go."

"But," observed the honest notary, "you are mistaken,

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I think, Monsieur the Count; it is only fifty thousand livres, everything included."

"And your fee?"

"Is included in this sum."

"But have you not come from Auteuil here?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, it is but fair that you should be paid for your loss of time and trouble," said the count; and he made a gesture of polite dismissal. The notary left the room backwards, and bowing down to the ground; it was the first time he had ever met such a client.

"See this gentleman out," said the count to Bertuccio. And the steward followed the notary out of the room.

Scarcely was the count alone, when he drew from his pocket a book closed with a lock, and opened it with a key which he wore round his neck, and which never left him. After having sought for a few minutes, he stopped at a leaf which contained a few notes and compared them with the deed of sale which lay on the table, and reviving his recollections, "'Auteuil, Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28.' It is indeed the same," said he; "and now, am I to rely upon an avowal extorted by religious or by physical terror? However, in an hour I shall know all. Bertuccio!" cried he, striking a light hammer with a pliant handle on a small gong. "Bertuccio!" The steward appeared at the door. "M. Bertuccio," said the count, "did you not once tell me that you had travelled in France?"

"In some parts of France, — yes, Excellency."

"You know the environs of Paris, then?"

"No, Excellency, no," returned the steward, with a sort of nervous trembling which Monte Cristo, a connoisseur in all emotions, rightly attributed to great disquietude.

"It is unfortunate," returned he, "that you have never

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visited the environs, for I wish to see my new property this evening; and in going with me you might have given me some useful information."

"To Auteuil!" cried Bertuccio, whose copper complexion became livid, — "I go to Auteuil?"

"Well, what is there surprising in that? When I live at Auteuil you must come there, as you belong to my service."

Bertuccio hung down his head before the imperious look of his master and remained motionless, without making any answer.

"Why, what has happened to you? Are you going to make me ring a second time for the carriage?" asked Monte Cristo, in the same tone that Louis XIV. pronounced the famous "I have been almost obliged to wait."

Bertuccio made but one bound to the ante-chamber and cried in a hoarse voice, "His Excellency's horses!"

Monte Cristo wrote two or three notes; and as he sealed the last the steward appeared. "Your Excellency's carriage is at the door," said he.

"Well, take your hat and gloves," returned Monte Cristo.

"Am I to accompany you, Monsieur the Count?" cried Bertuccio.

"Certainly, you must give your orders, for I intend residing at the house."

It was unexampled for a servant of the count's to dare to dispute an order of his; so the steward, without saying a word, followed his master, who got into the carriage and signed him to follow, which he did, seating himself respectfully on the front seat.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE HOUSE AT AUTEUIL.

MONTE CRISTO had remarked that as they descended the staircase Bertuccio signed himself in the Corsican manner, — that is, had formed the sign of the cross in the air with his thumb, — and as he seated himself in the carriage, muttered a short prayer. Any one but a curious man would have had pity on seeing the steward's extraordinary repugnance for the count's projected drive beyond the walls; but it seemed the count was too curious to excuse Bertuccio this little journey. In twenty minutes they were at Auteuil; the steward's emotion had continued to increase as they entered the village. Bertuccio, crouched in a corner of the carriage, began to examine with a feverish anxiety every house they passed.

"Tell them to stop at Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28," said the count, fixing his eyes on the steward, to whom he gave this order.

Bertuccio's forehead was covered with perspiration; but he obeyed, and leaning out of the window he cried to the coachman, "Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28."

No. 28 was situated at the extremity of the village; during the drive night had set in, or rather a black cloud charged with electricity gave to that early darkness the appearance and solemnity of a dramatic episode. The carriage stopped; the footman sprang off the box, and opened the door.

"Well," said the count, "you do not get out, M. Ber-

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tuccio, — you are going to stay in the carriage, then? What are you thinking of this evening?"

Bertuccio sprang out and offered his shoulder to the count, who this time leaned upon it as he descended the three steps of the carriage.

"Knock," said the count, "and announce me."

Bertuccio knocked; the door opened, and the *concierge* appeared. "What is it?" asked he.

"It is your new master, my good fellow," said the footman; and he held out to the *concierge* the notary's order.

"The house is sold, then?" demanded the *concierge;* "and this gentleman is coming to live here?"

"Yes, my friend," returned the count; "and I will endeavor to give you no cause to regret your old master."

"Oh, Monsieur," said the *concierge*, "I shall not have much cause to regret him, for he came here but seldom. It is five years since he was here last; and he did well to sell the house, for it did not bring him in anything at all."

"What was the name of your old master?" said Monte Cristo.

"M. le Marquis de Saint-Méran. Ah, I am sure he has not sold the house for what he gave for it."

"The Marquis de Saint-Méran!" returned the count. "The name is not unknown to me; the Marquis de Saint-Méran!" and he appeared to meditate.

"An old gentleman," continued the *concierge*, "a stanch follower of the Bourbons; he had an only daughter, who married M. de Villefort, who had been the *procureur du roi* at Nîmes, and afterwards at Versailles."

Monte Cristo glanced at Bertuccio, who became whiter than the wall against which he leaned to prevent himself from falling. "And is not this daughter dead?" demanded Monte Cristo; "I fancy I have heard so."

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"Yes, Monsieur, twenty-one years ago; and since then we have not seen the poor marquis three times."

"Thanks, thanks," said Monte Cristo, judging from the steward's utter prostration that he could not stretch the cord farther without danger of breaking it. "Give me a light."

"Shall I accompany you, Monsieur?"

"No, it is unnecessary; Bertuccio will light me." And Monte Cristo accompanied these words by the gift of two pieces of gold, which produced a torrent of thanks and blessings from the *concierge*.

"Ah, Monsieur," said he, after having vainly searched on the mantel-piece and the shelves, "I have no candles."

"Take one of the carriage-lamps, Bertuccio," said the count, "and show me the apartments."

The steward obeyed in silence; but it was easy to see from the manner in which the hand that held the light trembled, how much it cost him to obey. They went over a tolerably large ground-floor, a first floor consisting of a salon, a bathroom, and two bedrooms; by one of these bedrooms they arrived at a winding staircase that opened on to the garden.

"Ah! here is a private staircase," said the count; "that is convenient. Light me, M. Bertuccio, and go first; we will see where it leads to."

"Monsieur," replied Bertuccio, "it leads to the garden."

"And, pray, how do you know that?"

"It ought to do so, at least."

"Well, let us be sure of that."

Bertuccio sighed, and went on first; the stairs led, in fact, to the garden. At the outer door the steward paused. "Go on, M. Bertuccio," said the count. But he to whom he spoke was stupefied, bewildered, stunned; his haggard eyes glanced round, as if in search of the traces

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of some terrible event, and with his clinched hands he seemed striving to shut out some horrible recollections.

"Well!" insisted the count.

"No, no," cried Bertuccio, setting down the lantern at the angle of the interior wall. "No, Monsieur, it is impossible; I can go no farther."

"What does this mean?" demanded the irresistible voice of Monte Cristo.

"Why, you must see, Monsieur the Count," cried the steward, "that this is not natural, — that having a house to purchase, you purchase it exactly at Auteuil; and that, purchasing it at Auteuil, this house should be No. 28, Rue de la Fontaine. Oh! why did I not tell you all? I am sure you would not have forced me to come. I hoped your house would have been some other one than this; as if there was not another house at Auteuil than that of the assassination!"

"Ah, ah!" cried Monte Cristo, stopping suddenly, "what words did you utter? Devil of a man, Corsican that you are, — always mysteries or superstitions. Come, take the lantern, and let us visit the garden; you are not afraid with me, I hope?"

Bertuccio raised the lantern and obeyed. The door, as it opened, disclosed a gloomy sky, in which the moon strove vainly to struggle through a sea of clouds that covered her with their sombre wave, that she illumined for an instant, and was then lost in the darkness. The steward wished to turn to the left.

"No, no, Monsieur," said Monte Cristo; "what is the use of following the alleys? Here is a beautiful lawn; let us go on straight forwards."

Bertuccio wiped the perspiration from his brow, but obeyed; however, he continued to take the left hand. Monte Cristo, on the contrary, took the right hand;

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arrived near a clump of trees, he stopped. The steward could not restrain himself. "Move, Monsieur, — move away, I entreat you; you are exactly in the spot!"

"What spot?"

"Where he fell."

"My dear M. Bertuccio," said Monte Cristo, laughing, "recover yourself; we are no longer at Sartène or at Corté. This is not a *maquis* but an English garden, — badly kept, I own, but you must not calumniate it for that."

"Monsieur, I implore you, do not stay there!"

"I think you are going mad, Bertuccio," said the count, coldly. "If that is the case, I warn you I shall have you put in a lunatic asylum."

"Alas, Excellency," returned Bertuccio, joining his hands, and shaking his head in a manner that would have excited the count's laughter, had not thoughts of a superior interest occupied him and rendered him attentive to the least revelation of this timorous conscience, — "alas, Excellency, the evil has arrived!"

"M. Bertuccio," said the count, "I am very glad to tell you that while you gesticulate you wring your hands and roll your eyes like a man possessed by a devil that will not leave him; and I have always remarked that the devil most obstinate to be expelled is a secret. I knew you were a Corsican; I knew you were gloomy, and always brooding over some old history of the vendetta; and I overlooked that in Italy, because in Italy those things are thought nothing of. But in France assassination is generally held to be in very bad taste; there are gendarmes who occupy themselves with such affairs, judges who condemn, and scaffolds which avenge."

Bertuccio clasped his hands, and as in all these evolutions he did not let fall the lantern, the light showed his

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pale and altered countenance. Monte Cristo examined him with the same expression with which at Rome he had viewed the execution of Andrea, and then, in a tone that made a shudder pass through the veins of the poor steward, "The Abbé Busoni, then, told me an untruth," said he, "when after his journey in France, in 1829, he sent you to me with a letter of recommendation, in which he enumerated all your valuable qualities. Well, I shall write to the abbé; I shall render him responsible for his *protégé's* misconduct, and I shall soon know all about this assassination. Only I warn you that when I reside in a country, I conform to all its code, and I have no wish to embroil myself with French justice for your sake."

"Oh, do not do that, Excellency; I have always served you faithfully," cried Bertuccio, in despair. "I have always been an honest man, and as far as lay in my power I have done good."

"I do not deny it," returned the count; "but why are you thus agitated? It is a bad sign; a quiet conscience does not occasion such paleness in the cheeks and such fever in the hands—"

"But, Monsieur the Count," replied Bertuccio, hesitatingly, "did not M. l'Abbé Busoni, who heard my confession in the prison at Nîmes, tell you I had a heavy reproach to make against myself."

"Yes; but as he said you would make an excellent steward, I concluded you had stolen,—that was all."

"Oh, Monsieur the Count!" returned Bertuccio, contemptuously.

"Or, as you are a Corsican, that you had been unable to resist the desire of making a *peau*, as you call it."

"Yes, my good master," cried Bertuccio, casting himself at the count's feet; "it was simply a vengeance, nothing else."

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"I understand that; but I do not understand what it is that galvanizes you in this manner."

"But, Monsieur, it is very natural," returned Bertuccio; "since it was in this house that my vengeance was accomplished."

"What! my house?"

"Oh, Monsieur the Count, it was not yours then."

"Whose, then? M. le Marquis de Saint-Méran, I think the *concierge* said. What had you to revenge on the Marquis de Saint-Méran?"

"Oh, it was not on him, Monsieur; it was on another."

"This is strange," returned Monte Cristo, seeming to yield to his reflections, — "that you should find yourself without any preparation in a house where the event happened that causes you so much remorse."

"Monsieur," said the steward, "it is fatality, I am sure. First, you purchase a house at Auteuil; that house is the one where I have committed an assassination; you descend to the garden by the same staircase by which he descended; you stop at the spot where he received the blow; and two paces farther is the grave in which he had just buried his child. This is not chance, — for chance in this case resembles Providence too much."

"Well, Monsieur the Corsican, let us suppose it is Providence. I always suppose anything people please; and besides, you must concede something to diseased minds. Come, collect yourself, and tell me all."

"I have never related it but once, and that was to the Abbé Busoni. Such things," continued Bertuccio, shaking his head, "are only related under the seal of confession."

"Then," said the count, "I refer you to your confessor. Turn Chartreux or Trappist, and relate your secrets; but as for me, I do not like any one who is alarmed by such

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phantasms, and I do not choose that my servants should be afraid to walk in the garden of an evening. I confess I am not very desirous of a visit from the commissary of police; for in Italy justice is only paid when silent, in France she is paid only when she speaks. *Peste!* I thought you somewhat Corsican, a great deal smuggler, and an excellent steward; but I see you have other strings to your bow. You are no longer in my service, M. Bertuccio."

"Oh, Monsieur the Count, Monsieur the Count!" cried the steward, struck with terror at this threat, "if that is the only reason I cannot remain in your service, I will tell all, — for if I quit you it will only be to go to the scaffold."

"That is different," replied Monte Cristo; "but if you intend to tell an untruth, reflect. It were better not to speak at all."

"No, Monsieur, I swear to you by my hopes of salvation I will tell you all, for the Abbé Busoni himself only knew a part of my secret; but I pray you go away from that plane-tree. The moon is just bursting through the clouds, and there, standing where you do, and wrapped in that cloak that conceals your figure, you remind me of M. de Villefort."

"What!" cried Monte Cristo, "it was, then, M. de Villefort?"

"Your Excellency knows him?"

"The former *procureur du roi* at Nîmes?"

"Yes."

"Who married the Marquis de Saint-Méran's daughter?"

"Yes."

"Who enjoyed the reputation of being the most severe, the most upright, the most rigid magistrate on the bench?"

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"Well, Monsieur," said Bertuccio, "this man with this spotless reputation — "

"Well?"

"Was a villain."

"Bah!" replied Monte Cristo, "impossible!"

"It is as I tell you."

"Ah, really!" said Monte Cristo. "Have you proof of this?"

"I had it."

"And you have lost it; how stupid!"

"Yes; but by careful search it might be recovered."

"Really?" returned the count; "relate it to me, for it begins to interest me." And the count, humming an air from "Lucia di Lammermoor," went to sit down on a bench, while Bertuccio followed him, collecting his thoughts. Bertuccio remained standing before him.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE VENDETTA.

"At what point shall I begin my story, Monsieur the Count?" asked Bertuccio.

"Where you please," returned Monte Cristo, "since I know nothing at all of it."

"I thought M. l'Abbé Busoni had told your Excellency."

"Some particulars, doubtless; but that is seven or eight years ago, and I have forgotten them."

"Then I can speak without fear of tiring your Excellency?"

"Go on, M. Bertuccio; you will supply the want of the evening papers."

"The story begins in 1815."

"Ah," said Monte Cristo, "1815 is not yesterday."

"No, Monsieur; and yet I recollect all things as clearly as if they had happened but yesterday. I had a brother, an elder brother, who was in the service of the emperor; he had become lieutenant in a regiment composed entirely of Corsicans. This brother was my only friend; we became orphans, — I at five, he at eighteen. He brought me up as if I had been his son, and in 1814 he married. When the emperor returned from the island of Elba, my brother instantly joined the army, was slightly wounded at Waterloo, and retired with the army behind the Loire."

"But that is the history of the Hundred Days, M.

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Bertuccio," said the count; "unless I am mistaken, it has been already written."

"Excuse me, Excellency, but these details are necessary, and you promised to be patient."

"Go on; I will keep my word."

"One day we received a letter. I should tell you that we lived in the little village of Rogliano, at the extremity of Cape Corse. This letter was from my brother. He told us that the army was disbanded, and that he should return by Châteauroux, Clermont-Ferrand, Le Puy, and Nîmes; and if I had any money, he prayed me to leave it for him at Nîmes, with an innkeeper with whom I had dealings."

"In the smuggling line?" said Monte Cristo.

"Eh, Monsieur the Count? Every one must live."

"Certainly; continue."

"I loved my brother tenderly, as I told your Excellency, and I resolved not to send the money, but to take it to him myself. I possessed a thousand livres. I left five hundred with Assunta, my sister-in-law, and with the other five hundred I set off for Nîmes. It was easy to do so; and as I had my boat and a lading to take in at sea, everything favored my project. But after we had taken in our cargo, the wind became contrary, so that we were four or five days without being able to enter the Rhone. At last, however, we succeeded, and worked up to Arles; I left the boat between Bellegarde and Beaucaire, and took the road to Nîmes."

"We are getting to the story now?"

"Yes, your Excellency; excuse me, but, as you will see, I only tell you what is absolutely necessary. Just at this time the famous massacres of the south of France took place. Two or three brigands, called Trestaillon, Truphemy, and Graffan, publicly assassinated everybody

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whom they suspected of Bonapartism. You have doubtless heard of these massacres, Monsieur the Count?"

"Vaguely; I was far from France at that period. Go on."

"As I entered Nîmes, I literally waded in blood; at every step I encountered dead bodies, and bands of the murderers, who killed, plundered, and burned. At the sight of this slaughter and devastation I became terrified, — not for myself (for I, a simple Corsican fisherman, had nothing to fear; on the contrary, that time was most favorable for us smugglers); but for my brother, a soldier of the empire, returning from the army of the Loire, with his uniform and his epaulettes, there was everything to apprehend. I hastened to the innkeeper. My presages had been but too true; my brother had arrived the previous evening at Nîmes, and at the very door of the house where he was about to demand hospitality, he had been assassinated. I did all in my power to discover the murderers, but no one durst tell me their names, so much were they dreaded. I then thought of that French justice of which I had heard so much, and which feared nothing; and I went to the *procureur du roi*."

"And this *procureur du roi* was named Villefort?" asked Monte Cristo, carelessly.

"Yes, your Excellency; he came from Marseilles, where he had been deputy *procureur*. His zeal had procured him advancement, and he was said to be one of the first who had informed the Government of the departure from the island of Elba."

"Then," said Monte Cristo, "you went to him?"

"'Monsieur,' I said, 'my brother was assassinated yesterday in the streets of Nîmes, I know not by whom, but it is your duty to find out. You are the head of justice here; and it is for justice to avenge those she has been

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unable to protect.' 'Who was your brother?' asked he. 'A lieutenant in the Corsican battalion.' 'A soldier of the usurper, then?' 'A soldier of the French army.' 'Well,' replied he, 'he has smitten with the sword, and has perished by the sword.' 'You are mistaken, Monsieur,' I replied; 'he has perished by the poniard.' 'What do you want me to do?' asked the magistrate. 'I have already told you, — avenge him.' 'On whom?' 'On his murderers.' 'How should I know who they are?' 'Order them to be sought for.' 'Why? your brother has been involved in a quarrel, and killed in a duel. All these old soldiers commit excesses, which were tolerated in the time of the emperor, but which are not suffered now; for our people of the South do not like either soldiers or disorder.'

"'Monsieur,' I replied, 'it is not for myself that I entreat your interference, — I should grieve for him or avenge him; but my poor brother had a wife, and were anything to happen to me, the poor creature would perish from want, — for my brother's pay alone kept her. Pray try and obtain a small government pension for her.' 'Every revolution has its catastrophes,' returned M. de Villefort; 'your brother has been the victim of this. It is a misfortune, and Government owes nothing to his family. If we are to judge by all the acts of vengeance that the followers of the usurper exercised on the partisans of the king, when in their turn they were in power, your brother would be to-day in all probability condemned to death. What has happened is quite natural, and is only the law of reprisals.' 'What!' cried I, 'do you, a magistrate, speak thus to me?' 'All these Corsicans are mad, on my honor,' replied M. de Villefort; 'they fancy that their countryman is still emperor. You have mistaken the time; you should have told me this two months ago, — it is too late now. Depart instantly, or I will compel you to do so.' I looked at him

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an instant to see if there was anything to be gained by renewed entreaties; but this man was of stone. I approached him and said in a low voice, 'Well, since you know the Corsicans so well, you know that they always keep their word. You think that it was a good deed to kill my brother, who was a Bonapartist, because you are a Royalist! Well, I, who am a Bonapartist also, declare one thing to you, which is that I will kill you! From this moment I declare the vendetta against you; so protect yourself as well as you can, for the next time we meet your last hour will have come!' And before he had recovered from his surprise, I opened the door and escaped."

"Ah, ah!" said Monte Cristo, "with your innocent appearance you do those things, M. Bertuccio, and to a *procureur du roi!* And did he know what was meant by this terrible word 'vendetta'?"

"He knew so well that from that moment he never went out unattended, but shut himself up in his house, and caused me to be searched for everywhere. Fortunately, I was so well concealed that he could not find me. Then he became alarmed, and dared not reside any longer at Nîmes; so he solicited a change of residence, and as he was in reality very influential, he was nominated to Versailles. But, as you know, a Corsican who has sworn to avenge himself cares not for distance; so his carriage, fast as it went, was never above half a day's journey before me, who followed him on foot. The most important thing was not to kill him only — for I had an opportunity of doing so a hundred times — but to kill him without being discovered; at least, without being arrested. I no longer belonged to myself, for I had my sister-in-law to protect and provide for. During three months I watched M. de Villefort; for three months he took not a step out of doors without my following him. At length I discovered that

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he went mysteriously to Auteuil. I followed him thither, and I saw him enter the house where we now are; only, instead of entering by the great door that looks into the street, he came on horseback or in his carriage, left carriage or horse at the little inn, and entered by the gate you see there!"

Monte Cristo made a sign with his head that he could discern amid the darkness the door to which Bertuccio alluded.

"As I had nothing more to do at Versailles, I went to Auteuil and gained all the information I could. If I wished to surprise him, it was evident that this was the place in which to lie in wait for him. The house belonged, as the *concierge* informed your Excellency, to M. de Saint-Méran, Villefort's father-in-law. M. de Saint-Méran lived at Marseilles, so that this country-house was useless to him; and it was reported to be let to a young widow, known only by the name of 'the Baroness.'

"One evening, as I was looking over the wall, I saw a young and handsome woman who was walking alone in that garden, which was not overlooked by any windows; and I guessed that she was awaiting M. de Villefort. When she was sufficiently near to distinguish her features, I saw that she was from eighteen to nineteen years of age, tall and very fair. As she had a loose muslin dress on, and as nothing concealed her figure, I saw that she would ere long become a mother. A few moments after, the little door was opened, and a man entered; the young woman hastened to meet him. They threw themselves into each other's arms, embraced tenderly, and returned together to the house. This man was M. de Villefort; my opinion was that when he should go away, especially if he went in the night, he would have to traverse the whole of the garden alone."

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"And," asked the count, "did you ever know the name of this woman?"

"No, Excellency," returned Bertuccio; "you will see that I had no time to learn it."

"Go on."

"That evening," continued Bertuccio, "I could have killed the *procureur du roi;* but I was not sufficiently master of the localities. I was afraid that I might not kill him instantly, and that should his cries give the alarm, I could not escape. I deferred the undertaking until his next visit; and in order that nothing should escape me I took a chamber looking into the street, along which ran the wall of the garden. Three days after, about seven o'clock in the evening, I saw a servant on horseback leave the house at full gallop and take the road that led to Sèvres. I conjectured he was going to Versailles, and I was not deceived. Three hours after, the man returned covered with dust; his errand was performed. Ten minutes later another man, on foot, muffled in a mantle, opened the little door of the garden, which he closed after him. I descended rapidly; although I had not seen Villefort's face, I recognized him by the beating of my heart. I crossed the street and stopped at a post placed at the angle of the wall, by the aid of which I had once before looked into the garden. This time I did not content myself with looking, but I took my knife out of my pocket, assured myself that the point was sharp, and sprang over the wall. My first care was to run to the door; he had left the key in it, taking the simple precaution of turning it twice in the lock. Nothing, then, prevented my escape by this door. I examined the localities. The garden formed a long square; a terrace of smooth turf extended in the middle, and at the corners were tufts of trees with thick and massive foliage that mingled with

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the shrubs and flowers. In order to go from the door to the house, or from the house to the door, M. de Villefort was compelled to pass by one of these clumps.

"It was the end of September; the wind blew violently. The faint gleams of the pale moon, hidden at every instant by the masses of dark clouds that were sweeping across the sky, whitened the gravel walks that led to the house, but were unable to pierce the obscurity of the thick shrubberies, in which a man could conceal himself without any fear of discovery. I hid myself in the one nearest to the path Villefort must take, and scarcely was I there when amid the gusts of wind I fancied I heard groans; but you know, or rather you do not know, Monsieur the Count, that he who is about to commit an assassination fancies he hears low cries in the air. Two hours passed thus, during which I imagined I heard these moans repeated. Midnight struck. As the last stroke died away, I saw a faint light shine through the windows of the private staircase by which we have just descended. The door opened, and the man in the mantle reappeared. The terrible moment had come! but I had so long been prepared for it that my heart did not fail in the least. I drew my knife from my pocket again, opened it, and prepared myself to strike. The man in the mantle advanced towards me, but as he drew near I saw that he had a weapon in his hand. I was afraid, not of a struggle, but of a failure. When he was only a few paces from me I saw that what I had taken for a weapon was only a spade. I was still unable to divine for what reason M. de Villefort had this spade in his hands, when he stopped close to the clump, glanced round, and began to dig a hole in the earth. I then perceived that he hid something beneath his mantle, which he laid on the grass in order to dig more freely. Then, I confess, curiosity became mixed

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with my hatred; I wished to see what Villefort was going to do there, and I remained motionless, holding my breath. Then an idea crossed my mind, which was confirmed when I saw the *procureur du roi* draw from under his mantle a box two feet long and six or eight inches deep. I let him place the box in the hole he had made; then, while he stamped with his feet to remove all traces of his occupation, I rushed on him and plunged my knife into his breast, exclaiming: 'I am Giovanni Bertuccio; thy death for my brother's; thy treasure for his widow! Thou seest that my vengeance is more complete than I had hoped!' I know not if he heard these words; I think he did not, for he fell without a cry. I felt his blood gush over my face; but I was intoxicated, I was delirious, and the blood refreshed instead of burning me. In a second I had disinterred the box; then, that it might not be known that I had done so, I filled up the hole, threw the spade over the wall, and rushed through the door, which I double-locked, carrying off the key."

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, "it seems to me this was a little assassination combined with robbery."

"No, your Excellency," returned Bertuccio; "it was a vendetta followed by a restitution."

"And was the sum a large one?"

"It was not money."

"Ah! I recollect," replied the count; "did you not say something of an infant?"

"Yes, Excellency; I hastened to the river, sat down on the bank, and with my knife forced open the lock of the box. In a fine linen cloth was wrapped a new-born child. Its purple visage and its violet-colored hands showed that it had perished from suffocation; but as it was not yet cold I hesitated to throw it into the water that ran at my feet. In fact, after a moment I fancied I felt a slight pul-

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sation of its heart; and as I had been assistant at the hospital at Bastia, I did what a doctor would have done, — I inflated its lungs by blowing air into them. And at the expiration of a quarter of an hour I saw it breathe, and heard a feeble cry; in my turn, I uttered a cry, but a cry of joy. 'God has not cursed me, then,' I cried, 'since he permits me to save the life of a human creature in exchange for the life I have taken away.'"

"And what did you do with the child?" asked Monte Cristo. "It was an embarrassing load for a man seeking to escape."

"I had not for a moment the idea of keeping it; but I knew that at Paris there was a hospital where they receive these poor creatures. As I passed the barrier I declared I had found this child on the road, and I inquired where the hospital was. The box confirmed my statement; the linen proved it belonged to wealthy parents; the blood with which I was covered might have proceeded from the child as well as from any one else. No objection was raised, but they pointed out to me the hospital, which was situated at the upper end of the Rue d'Enfer; and after having taken the precaution of cutting the linen in two pieces, so that one of the two letters which marked it was wrapped round the child, while the other remained in my possession, I rang the bell and fled with all speed. A fortnight after I was at Rogliano, and I said to Assunta, 'Console thyself, Sister; Israel is dead, but he is avenged.' She asked what I meant, and when I had recounted all to her, 'Giovanni,' said she, 'you should have brought this child with you. We would have replaced the parents it has lost, have called it Benedetto; and then in consequence of this good action, God would have blessed us.' In reply I gave her the half of the linen I had kept, in order to reclaim him if we should become more prosperous."

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"What letters were marked on the linen?" said Monte Cristo.

"An H and an N, surmounted by a baron's torse."

"By Heaven, M. Bertuccio, you make use of heraldic terms! Where did you study heraldry?"

"In your service, Excellency, where one learns everything."

"Go on; I am curious to know two things."

"What are they, Monseigneur?"

"What became of this little boy? for I think you told me it was a boy, M. Bertuccio."

"No, Excellency, I do not recollect telling you that."

"I thought you did; I was mistaken."

"No, you were not, for it was in fact a little boy. But your Excellency wished to know two things; what was the second?"

"The second was the crime of which you were accused when you asked for a confessor, and the Abbé Busoni came to visit you at your request in the prison at Nîmes."

"The story will be very long, Excellency."

"What matter? You know I take but little sleep; and I do not suppose you are very much inclined for it either."

Bertuccio bowed and resumed his story. "Partly to drown the recollections of the past that haunted me, partly to supply the wants of the poor widow, I eagerly returned to my trade of smuggler, which had become more easy by reason of that relaxation of the laws which always follows a revolution. The coasts of the South especially were poorly guarded, in consequence of the disturbances that were perpetually breaking out in Avignon, Nîmes, or Uzés. We profited by the kind of respite Government gave us to establish connections along the seaboard. Since my brother's assassination in the streets of Nîmes, I had never

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entered the town; the result was that the innkeeper with whom we were connected, seeing we would no longer come to him, was forced to come to us, and had established a branch to his inn on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire, at the sign of the Pont du Gard. We had thus, in the direction of Aigues-Mortes, Martiques, and at Bouc, a dozen places where we left our goods, and where in case of necessity, we concealed ourselves from the gendarmes and custom-house officers. Smuggling is a profitable trade when a certain degree of vigor and intelligence is employed; as for myself, brought up in the mountains, I had a double motive for fearing the gendarmes and custom-house officers, — as my appearance before the judges would cause an inquiry, and an inquiry always looks back into the past. And in my past life they might find something far more grave than the selling of smuggled cigars or barrels of brandy, without a permit. So preferring death to capture, I accomplished the most astonishing deeds, which more than once showed me that the too great care we take of our bodies is almost the only obstacle to the success of those projects which require a rapid decision and vigorous and determined execution. In fact, when you have once devoted your life, you are no longer the equal of other men, or rather, other men are no longer your equals; and whosoever has taken this resolution feels at once that his strength is ten times as great, and that his horizon is enlarged."

"Philosophy, M. Bertuccio!" interrupted the count; "you have done a little of everything in your life."

"Oh, your pardon, Excellency."

"No, no; but philosophy at half-past ten at night is somewhat late. Yet I have no other observation to make, except that what you say is correct, which is more than can be said for all philosophy."

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"My journeys became more and more extensive and more productive. Assunta took care of all, and our little fortune increased. One day when I was setting off on an expedition, 'Go,' said she; 'at your return I will give you a surprise.' I questioned her, but in vain; she would tell me nothing, and I departed. Our expedition lasted nearly six weeks. We had been to Lucca to take in oil, to Leghorn for English cottons; and we landed our cargo without opposition, took our profits, and returned home full of joy. When I entered the house the first thing I beheld in the centre of Assunta's chamber was a cradle that might be called sumptuous compared with the rest of the furniture, and in it a baby of seven or eight months old. I uttered a cry of joy; the only moments of sadness I had known since the assassination of the *procureur du roi* were caused by the recollection that I had abandoned this child. For the assassination itself I had never felt any remorse. Poor Assunta had divined all. She had profited by my absence, and furnished with the half of the linen, and having written down the day and hour at which I had deposited the child at the hospital, had set off for Paris and had reclaimed it. No objection was raised, and the infant was given up to her. Ah, I confess, Monsieur the Count, when I saw this poor creature sleeping peacefully in its cradle, I felt my eyes filled with tears. 'Ah, Assunta,' cried I, 'you are an excellent woman, and Heaven will bless you.'"

"This," said Monte Cristo, "is less correct than your philosophy; it is true that this is only faith."

"Alas! your Excellency is right," replied Bertuccio, "and God made this infant the instrument of our punishment. Never did a perverse nature declare itself more prematurely; and yet it was not owing to any fault in his bringing up. He was a most lovely child, with large blue

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eyes of that deep color that harmonizes so well with the general fairness of the complexion; only his hair, which was too light, gave his face a singular expression, which redoubled the vivacity of his look and the malice of his smile. Unfortunately, there is a proverb that says that 'red is either altogether good or altogether bad.' The proverb was but too correct as regarded Benedetto; and even in his infancy he manifested the worst disposition. It is true that the indulgence of his mother encouraged him. This child, for whom my poor sister would go to the town five or six leagues off to purchase the earliest fruits and the most tempting sweetmeats, preferred to the oranges of Palma or the preserves of Genoa the chestnuts stolen from a neighbor's orchard or the dried apples in his loft, although he could eat as well of the nuts and apples that grew in my garden. One day when Benedetto was about five or six, our neighbor Wasilio, who, according to the custom of the country, never locked up his purse or his valuables, — for, as your Excellency knows, there are no thieves in Corsica, — complained that he had lost a louis out of his purse; we thought he must have made a mistake in counting his money, but he persisted in the accuracy of his statement. That day Benedetto, who had left the house in the morning to our great anxiety, did not return until late in the evening, when we saw him approach dragging a monkey after him, which he said he had found chained to the foot of a tree. For more than a month the mischievous child, who knew not what to wish for, had taken it into his head to have a monkey. A boatman who had passed by Rogliano, and who had several of these animals, whose tricks had greatly diverted him, had doubtless suggested this idea to him. 'Monkeys are not found in our woods chained to trees,' said I; 'confess how you obtained this animal.' Benedetto ad-

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hered to his falsehood, and accompanied it with details than did more honor to his imagination than to his veracity. I became angry; he began to laugh. I threatened to strike him, and he made two steps backwards. 'You cannot beat me,' said he; 'you have no right, for you are not my father.'

"We never knew who had revealed this fatal secret, which we had so carefully concealed from him; however, it was this answer, in which the child's whole character revealed itself, that almost terrified me, and my arm fell without touching him. The boy triumphed; and this victory rendered him so audacious that all the money of Assunta, whose affection for him seemed to increase as he became more unworthy of it, was spent in caprices she knew not how to contend against, and follies she had not the courage to prevent. When I was at Rogliano everything went on properly; but no sooner was my back turned than Benedetto became master, and everything went wrong. When he was only eleven he chose his companions from among the young men of eighteen or twenty, the worst characters in Bastia, or indeed in Corsica; and they had already for some pieces of mischief been several times threatened with a prosecution. I became alarmed, as any prosecution might be attended with serious consequences. I was compelled at this period to leave Corsica on an important expedition; I reflected for a long time, and with the hope of averting some impending misfortune, I resolved that Benedetto should accompany me. I hoped that the active and laborious life of a smuggler, with the severe discipline on board, would have a salutary effect on his character, well-nigh, if not quite corrupted. I spoke to Benedetto alone and proposed to him to accompany me, endeavoring to tempt him by all the promises most likely to dazzle the imagination of a child of twelve years old.

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He heard me patiently, and when I had finished, burst out laughing.

"'Are you mad, Uncle?' (He called me by this name when he was in a good humor.) 'Do you think I am going to change the life I lead for your mode of existence, — my agreeable indolence for the hard and precarious toil you impose on yourself? exposed to the bitter frost at night and the scorching heat by day, compelled to conceal yourself, and when you are perceived, to receive a volley of balls, — and all to earn a paltry sum? Why, I have as much money as I want; Mother Assunta always furnishes me when I ask for it! You see that I should be a fool to accept your offer.' I was stupefied by such audacity and such reasoning. Benedetto rejoined his associates; and I saw him from a distance point me out to them as a fool."

"Sweet child!" murmured Monte Cristo.

"Oh! had he been my own son," replied Bertuccio, "or even my nephew, I would have brought him back to the right road, for the knowledge that you are doing your duty gives you strength; but the idea that I was striking a child whose father I had killed made it impossible for me to punish him. I gave my sister, who constantly defended the unfortunate boy, good advice; and as she confessed that she had several times missed money to a considerable amount, I showed her a safe place in which to conceal our little treasure for the future. My mind was already made up: Benedetto could read, write, and cipher perfectly, — for when the fit seized him, he learned more in a day than others in a week; my intention was to enter him as clerk in some ship, and without letting him know anything of my plan, to convey him some morning on board. After I should have done that, and recommended him to the captain, his future would depend upon himself. I set off for France, after having fixed upon the plan. All our cargo

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was to be landed in the Gulf of Lyons; and these operations were becoming more and more difficult, for we were in 1829. Tranquillity was completely re-established, and the vigilance of the custom-house officers was redoubled; and their strictness was increased at this time in consequence of the fair of Beaucaire, which had just opened.

"Our expedition was successfully started. We anchored our vessel, which had a double hold in which our goods were concealed, amid a number of other vessels that bordered the banks of the Rhone from Beaucaire to Arles. On our arrival there we began to discharge our cargo in the night, and to convey it into the town by the help of the innkeepers with whom we were connected. Whether success rendered us imprudent, or whether we were betrayed, I know not; but one evening, about five o'clock, our little cabin-boy hastened, breathless, to inform us that he had seen a detachment of custom-house officers advancing in our direction. It was not their vicinity that alarmed us, — for detachments were constantly patrolling along the banks of the Rhone, — but the care, according to the boy's account, which they took to avoid being seen. In an instant we were on the alert; but it was too late. Our vessel was surrounded, and among the custom-house officers I observed several gendarmes; and as terrified at the sight of their uniforms as I was brave at the sight of any other, I sprang into the hold, opened a port, and dropped into the river, dived, and only rose at intervals to breathe, until I reached a cutting that led from the Rhone to the canal that runs from Beaucaire to Aigues-Mortes. I was now safe, for I could swim along the cutting without being seen, and I reached the canal in safety; I had designedly taken this direction. I have already told your Excellency of an innkeeper of Nimes who had set up a little inn on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire."

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"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "I perfectly recollect him; I think he was your associate."

"Precisely," answered Bertuccio; "but he had, seven or eight years before this period, sold his establishment to a tailor at Marseilles, who, having almost ruined himself in his old trade, wished to make his fortune in another. Of course we made the same arrangements with the new landlord that we had with the old; and it was of this man that I intended to ask shelter."

"What was his name?" then inquired the count, who seemed to become somewhat interested in Bertuccio's story.

"Gaspard Caderousse; he had married a woman from the village of Carconte, and whom we did not know by any other name than that of her village. She was suffering from the marsh-fever, and seemed dying by inches. As for her husband, he was a strapping fellow, forty or forty-five years old, who had more than once in time of danger given ample proof of his presence of mind and courage."

"And you say," interrupted Monte Cristo, "that this took place towards the year—"

"1829, Monsieur the Count."

"In what month?"

"June."

"The beginning or the end?"

"The evening of the 3d."

"Ah," said Monte Cristo, "the evening of the 3d of June, 1829. Go on."

"It was from Caderousse that I intended demanding shelter; and as we never entered by the door that opened on to the road, I resolved not to break through the rule, and climbing over the garden hedge, I crept among the olive and wild fig trees. And fearing that Caderousse might have some one there, I entered a kind of shed in

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which I had often passed the night, and which was separated from the inn only by a partition in which holes had been made in order to enable us to watch an opportunity of announcing our presence. My intention was, if Caderousse was alone, to acquaint him with my arrival, finish the meal the custom-house officers had interrupted, and profit by the threatened storm to return to the Rhone and ascertain the state of our vessel and its crew. I stepped into the shed; and it was fortunate I did so, for at that moment Caderousse entered with a stranger.

"I waited patiently, not to overhear what they said, but because I could do nothing else; besides, the same thing had occurred often before. The man who was with Caderousse was evidently a stranger to the south of France; he was one of those merchants who come to sell jewelry at the fair of Beaucaire, and who during the month the fair lasts, when there is so great an influx of merchants and customers from all parts of Europe, often have dealings to the amount of one hundred thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand livres. Caderousse entered hastily. Then, seeing that the room was, as usual, empty and only guarded by the dog, he called to his wife. 'Holloa, Carconte!' said he, 'the worthy priest has not deceived us; the diamond is real.' An exclamation of joy was heard; and the staircase creaked beneath a feeble step. 'What do you say?' asked his wife, pale as death. 'I say that the diamond is real, and that this gentleman, one of the first jewellers of Paris, will give us fifty thousand livres for it. Only, in order to satisfy himself that it really belongs to us, he wishes you to relate to him, as I have done already, the miraculous manner in which the diamond came into our possession. In the mean time, please to sit down, Monsieur, and I will bring you some refreshment.'

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"The jeweller examined attentively the interior of the inn and observed the visible poverty of the persons who were about to sell him a diamond that seemed to have come from the casket of a prince. 'Relate your story, Madame,' said he, wishing no doubt to profit by the absence of the husband, so that the latter could not influence the wife's story, and to see if the two recitals tallied. 'Oh!' returned she, 'it was a gift of Heaven, which we were far from expecting! My husband was a great friend, in 1814 or 1815, of a sailor named Edmond Dantès. This poor fellow, whom Caderousse had forgotten, had not forgotten him; and at his death he bequeathed this diamond to him.' 'But how did he obtain it?' asked the jeweller; 'had he it before he was imprisoned?' 'No, Monsieur; but it appears that in prison he made the acquaintance of a rich Englishman. And as in prison he fell sick, and Dantès took the same care of him as if he had been his brother, the Englishman, when he was set free, gave this stone to Dantès, who, less fortunate, died, and in his turn left it us, and charged the excellent abbé who was here this morning to deliver it.' 'The same story!' muttered the jeweller; 'and improbable as it seems at first, the history may be true. There's only the price we are not agreed about.' 'How not agreed about?' said Caderousse. 'I thought we agreed for the price I asked.' 'That is,' replied the jeweller, 'I offered forty thousand livres.' 'Forty thousand!' cried La Carconte; 'we will not part with it for that sum. The abbé told us it was worth fifty thousand without the setting.' 'What was the abbé's name?' asked the indefatigable questioner. 'The Abbé Busoni,' said La Carconte. 'He was a foreigner?' 'An Italian, from the neighborhood of Mantua, I believe.' 'Let me see this diamond again,' replied the jeweller; 'the first time you are often mistaken as to the

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value of a stone.' Caderousse took from his pocket a small case of black shagreen, opened, and gave it to the jeweller. At the sight of the diamond, which was as large as a hazel-nut, La Carconte's eyes sparkled with cupidity."

"And what did you think of this fine story, eavesdropper?" said Monte Cristo; "did you credit it?"

"Yes, your Excellency. I did not look on Caderousse as a bad man, and I thought him incapable of committing a crime, or even a theft."

"That did more honor to your heart than to your experience, M. Bertuccio. Had you known this Edmond Dantès, of whom they spoke?"

"No, your Excellency, I had never heard of him before, and never but once afterwards; and that was from the Abbé Busoni himself, when I saw him in the prison at Nîmes."

"Go on."

"The jeweller took the ring; and drawing from his pocket a pair of steel pliers and a small set of copper scales, taking the stone out of its setting, he weighed it carefully. 'I will give you forty-five thousand,' said he, 'but not a half-penny more; besides, as that is the exact value of the stone, I brought just that sum with me.' 'Oh, that 's no matter,' replied Caderousse, 'I will go back with you to fetch the other five thousand livres. 'No,' returned the jeweller, giving back the diamond and the ring to Caderousse, — 'no, it is worth no more; and I am sorry I offered so much, for the stone has a flaw in it, which I had not seen. However, I will not go from my word, and I will give forty-five thousand.' 'At least, replace the diamond in the ring,' said La Carconte, sharply. 'Ah, true,' replied the jeweller, and he reset the stone. 'No matter,' observed Caderousse, replacing the box in his

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pocket, 'some one else will purchase it.' 'Yes,' continued the jeweller; 'but some one else will not be so easy as I am, or content himself with the same story. It is not natural that a man like you should possess such a diamond. He will inform against you. You will have to find the Abbé Busoni; and abbés who give diamonds worth two thousand louis are rare. Justice would seize it, and put you in prison; if at the end of three or four months you are set at liberty, the ring will be lost, or a false stone, worth three livres, will be given you, instead of a diamond worth fifty thousand livres, perhaps fifty-five thousand, but which you must allow one runs considerable risk in purchasing.' Caderousse and his wife looked eagerly at each other. 'No,' said Caderousse, 'we are not rich enough to lose five thousand livres.' 'As you please, my dear sir,' said the jeweller; 'I had, however, as you see, brought you the money in bright coin.' And he drew from his pocket a handful of gold, which he made to sparkle in the dazzled eyes of the innkeeper, and in the other hand he held a packet of bank-notes.

"There was visibly a severe struggle in the mind of Caderousse; it was evident that the small shagreen case, which he turned and re-turned in his hand, did not seem to him commensurate in value with the enormous sum which fascinated his gaze. He turned towards his wife. 'What do you think of this?' he asked in a low voice. 'Let him have it; let him have it!' she said. 'If he returns to Beaucaire without the diamond, he will inform against us; and as he says, who knows if we shall ever again see the Abbé Busoni?' 'Well, then, so I will!' said Caderousse; 'so you may have the diamond for forty-five thousand livres. But my wife wants a gold chain, and I want a pair of silver buckles.' The jeweller drew from his pocket a long flat box, which contained several

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samples of the articles demanded. 'Here,' he said, 'I am very plain in my dealings; take your choice.' The woman selected a gold chain worth about five louis, and the husband a pair of buckles worth perhaps fifteen livres. 'I hope you will not complain now?' said the jeweller. 'The abbé told me it was worth fifty thousand livres,' muttered Caderousse. 'Come, come; give it to me! What a strange fellow you are!' said the jeweller, taking the diamond from his hand. 'I give you forty-five thousand livres, — that is, two thousand five hundred livres of income, — a fortune such as I wish I had myself; and you are not satisfied!' 'And the forty-five thousand livres,' inquired Caderousse, in a hoarse voice, 'where are they? Come, let us see them!' 'Here they are,' replied the jeweller; and he counted out upon the table fifteen thousand livres in gold, and thirty thousand livres in bank-notes. 'Wait while I light the lamp,' said La Carconte; 'it is growing dark, and there may be some mistake.'

"In fact the night had come on during this conversation, and with the night the storm which had been threatening for the last half-hour. The thunder was heard growling in the distance; but neither the jeweller, nor Caderousse, nor La Carconte seemed to heed it, possessed as they were with the demon of gain. I myself felt a strange kind of fascination at the sight of all this gold and all these bank-notes; it seemed to me that I was in a dream, and as it always happens in a dream, I felt myself riveted to the spot. Caderousse counted and again counted the gold and the notes; then handed them to his wife, who counted and counted them again in her turn. During this time, the jeweller made the diamond play and sparkle beneath the ray of the lamp; and the gem threw out flashes of light which made him unmindful of those which — precursors of the storm — began to play in at

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the windows. 'Well,' inquired the jeweller, 'is the cash all right?' 'Yes,' said Caderousse. 'Give me the pocket-book, La Carconte, and find a bag somewhere.'

"La Carconte went to a cupboard, and returned with an old leathern pocket-book from which she took some greasy letters and put in their place the bank-notes, and a bag in which were at the moment two or three crowns of six livres each, and which in all probability formed the entire fortune of the miserable couple. 'There,' said Caderousse; 'and now, although you have wronged us of perhaps ten thousand livres, will you have your supper with us? I invite you with good-will.' 'Thank you,' replied the jeweller; 'it must be getting late, and I must return to Beaucaire. My wife will be getting uneasy.' He drew out his watch, and exclaimed, '*Morbleu!* nearly nine o'clock! Why, I shall not get back to Beaucaire before midnight! Good-night, my dears. If the Abbé Busoni should by any accident return, think of me.' 'In another week you will have left Beaucaire,' remarked Caderousse, 'for the fair finishes in a few days.' 'True; but that is no consequence. Write to me at Paris, to M. Joannes, in the Palais-Royal, Stone Gallery, No. 45; I will make the journey on purpose to see him.'

"At this moment there was a tremendous clap of thunder accompanied by a flash of lightning so vivid that it quite eclipsed the light of the lamp. 'Oh, dear!' exclaimed Caderousse. 'You cannot think of going out in such weather as this.' 'Oh, I am not afraid of thunder!' said the jeweller. 'And then there are robbers,' said La Carconte; 'the road is never very safe during fair time.' 'Oh, as to the robbers,' said Joannes, 'here is something for them;' and he drew from his pocket a pair of small pistols, loaded to the muzzle. 'Here,' said he, 'are dogs who bark and bite at the same time; they are for the

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first two who shall have a longing for your diamond, Father Caderousse.'

"Caderousse and his wife again interchanged a meaning look. It seemed as though they were both inspired at the same time with some horrible thought. 'Well, then, a good journey to you!' said Caderousse. 'Thank you,' replied the jeweller. He then took his cane, which he had placed against an old cupboard, and went out. At the moment when he opened the door, such a gust of wind came in that the lamp was nearly extinguished. 'Oh!' said he, 'this is very nice weather; and two leagues to go in such a storm!' 'Remain,' said Caderousse; 'you can sleep here.' 'Yes; do stay,' added La Carconte, in a tremulous voice; 'we will take every care of you.' 'No; I must sleep at Beaucaire. So once more, good-night!' Caderousse followed him slowly to the threshold. 'I can neither see heaven nor earth!' said the jeweller, who was outside the door. 'Do I turn to the right or to the left hand?' 'To the right,' said Caderousse. 'You cannot go wrong; the road is bordered by trees on both sides.' 'Good; all right!' said a voice almost lost in the distance. 'Close the door,' said La Carconte; 'I do not like open doors when it thunders.' 'Particularly when there is money in the house, eh?' answered Caderousse, double-locking the door.

"He came into the room, went to the cupboard, took out the bag and pocket-book, and both began for the third time to count their gold and bank-notes. I never saw such an expression of cupidity as the flickering lamp revealed in the two countenances. The woman especially was hideous; the feverish tremulousness she usually had was redoubled; her countenance had become livid, and her eyes resembled burning coals. 'Why,' she inquired in a hoarse voice, 'did you invite him to sleep here to-

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night?' 'Why?' said Caderousse, with a shudder; 'why, that he might not have the trouble of returning to Beaucaire.' 'Ah!' responded the woman, with an expression impossible to render; 'I thought it was for something else.' 'Woman, woman, why do you have such ideas?' cried Caderousse; 'or if you have them, why don't you keep them to yourself?' 'Well,' said La Carconte, after a moment's pause, 'you are not a man!' 'What do you mean?' added Caderousse. 'If you had been a man, you would not have let him go from here.' 'Woman!' 'Or else he should not have reached Beaucaire.' 'Woman!' 'The road takes a turn, — he is obliged to follow it, — while alongside of the canal there is a shorter road.' 'Woman! you offend the good God! There! listen!' And at this moment there was heard a tremendous peal of thunder, while the livid lightning illumined the room; and the thunder, then rolling away to a distance, seemed to leave reluctantly the cursed abode. 'Jesus!' said Caderousse, crossing himself.

"At the same moment and in the midst of the silence so full of terror which usually follows claps of thunder, they heard a knocking at the door. Caderousse and his wife started and looked aghast at each other. 'Who 's there?' cried Caderousse, rising and drawing up in a heap the gold and notes scattered over the table, and which he covered with his two hands. 'It is I!' shouted a voice. 'And who are you?' 'Eh, *pardieu!* Joannes the jeweller.' 'Well, and you said I offended the good God!' said Carconte, with a horrid smile, 'why, it is the good God who sends him back again.' Caderousse fell back, pale and breathless, in his chair. La Carconte on the contrary rose, and going with a firm step towards the door, opened it, saying as she did so, 'Come in, dear M. Joannes.' 'Upon my word!' said the jeweller, drenched with rain, 'it seems

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as if I was not to return to Beaucaire to-night. The shortest follies are best, my dear Caderousse. You offered me hospitality, and I accept it, and have returned to sleep beneath your friendly roof.' Caderousse stammered out some words while he wiped away the damp that started to his brow. La Carconte double-locked the door behind the jeweller.

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CHAPTER XV.

THE RAIN OF BLOOD.

"As the jeweller returned to the apartment, he cast around him a scrutinizing glance; but there was nothing to excite suspicion, if it did not exist, or to confirm it, if already awakened. Caderousse's hands still grasped his gold and bank-notes; and La Carconte smiled upon her guest as pleasantly as she could. 'Heyday!' said the jeweller, 'you seem to have had some fears respecting the amount of your receipts, since you go over them again after my departure.' 'No, no,' answered Caderousse; 'but the circumstances by which we have become possessed of this wealth are so unexpected as to make us scarcely credit our good fortune, and it is only by placing the actual proof of our riches before our eyes that we can persuade ourselves the whole affair is not a dream.' The jeweller smiled. 'Have you any other guests in your house?' inquired he. 'No,' replied Caderousse, 'we do not lodge travellers; we are so near the town that nobody would think of stopping here.' 'Then I am afraid I shall very much inconvenience you!' 'Oh, dear me, no! indeed, my dear Monsieur, you will not,' said La Carconte; 'not at all, I assure you.' 'But where will you manage to stow me?' 'In the chamber overhead.' 'But is not that your chamber?' 'Never mind that; we have a second bed in the room adjoining this.' Caderousse stared at his wife with much astonishment.

"The jeweller, meanwhile, was humming a song as he

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stood warming his back by the fire which La Carconte had lighted in the fireplace to dry the wet garments of her guest. She also spread a napkin at the end of the table and placed on it the slender remains of their dinner, to which she added three or four fresh eggs. Caderousse had once more parted with his treasures; the bank-notes were replaced in the pocket-book, the gold put back into the bag, and the whole carefully locked in the strong-box. He then began pacing the room with a pensive and gloomy air, glancing from time to time at the jeweller, who stood steaming before the fire, and as soon as he got dry on one side, turning the other.

"'There,' said La Carconte, as she placed a bottle of wine on the table, 'supper is ready whenever you are inclined to partake of it.' 'But you are going to sit down with me, are you not?' asked Joannes. 'I shall not take any supper to-night,' said Caderousse. 'We dined very late,' hastily interposed La Carconte. 'Then it seems I am to eat alone?' remarked the jeweller. 'Oh, we shall have the pleasure of waiting upon you,' answered La Carconte, with an eager attention she was not accustomed to manifest even to guests who paid for what they took.

"From one minute to another Caderousse darted on his wife keen, searching glances, but rapid as the lightning-flash. The storm still continued. 'There! there!' said La Carconte; 'do you hear that? Upon my word, you did well to return.' 'Nevertheless,' replied the jeweller, 'if by the time I have finished my supper the tempest has at all abated, I shall make another attempt to complete my journey.' 'Oh,' said Caderousse, shaking his head, 'there is not the slightest chance of its abating; it is the *mistral*, and that will be sure to last till to-morrow morning.' He then sighed heavily. 'Well!' said the jeweller, as he placed himself at table, 'all I can say is,

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so much the worse for those who are abroad.' 'Ah!' chimed in La Carconte, 'they will have a wretched night of it.'

"The jeweller began to eat his supper, and La Carconte continued to pay him the little attentions of a careful hostess. Ordinarily so whimsical and cross-grained, she had become a model of painstaking politeness. Had the jeweller been previously acquainted with her, a change so marked certainly would have surprised him, and would not have failed to excite in him some suspicion. Caderousse, meanwhile, continued to pace the room and seemed unwilling to look at his guest; but as soon as the stranger had completed his repast, he went to the door and opened it. 'The storm seems over,' said he. But as if to contradict his statement, at that instant a violent clap of thunder seemed to shake the house to its very foundation, while a sudden gust of wind, mingled with rain, extinguished the lamp he held in his hand. Caderousse shut the door and returned to his guest, while La Carconte lighted a candle by the smouldering ashes that glimmered on the hearth. 'You must be tired,' said she to the jeweller; 'I have spread a pair of white sheets on your bed. Go up to your room, and may you sleep well!'

"Joannes waited a moment to assure himself that the storm was not abating; and when he saw that the thunder and the rain were increasing, he bade his hosts good-night and ascended the staircase. He passed over my head, and I heard every step creak as he went up. La Carconte followed him with eager eyes, while Caderousse on the contrary did not even look in that direction.

"All these details, which since that time have been gathered up in my mind, made but little impression on me when they were taking place before my eyes; in fact, all that had happened (with the exception of the story

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of the diamond, which certainly did wear an air of improbability) appeared quite natural; but worn out as I was with fatigue, and fully purposing to proceed onwards as soon as the tempest abated, I determined to take advantage of the comparative silence and tranquillity that prevailed to obtain the refreshment of a few hours' sleep. Overhead I could accurately distinguish every movement of the jeweller, who, after making the best arrangements in his power for passing a comfortable night, threw himself on his bed, and I could hear it creak and groan beneath his weight. Insensibly my eyelids grew heavy; deep sleep stole over me; and having no suspicion of anything wrong, I sought not to shake it off. For the last time I looked in upon the room where Caderousse and his wife were sitting; the former was seated upon one of those low wooden stools which in country places are frequently used instead of chairs. His back being turned towards me, I could not see the expression of his countenance; neither should I have been able to do so had he been placed differently, as his head was buried between his two hands. La Carconte continued to gaze on him for some time in contemptuous silence; then shrugging up her shoulders, she took her seat immediately opposite to him. At this moment the expiring embers threw up a fresh flame from the kindling of a piece of wood that lay near; and a bright gleam was thrown on the scene and the actors in it. La Carconte still kept her eyes fixed on her husband; but as he made no sign of changing his position, she extended her hard bony hand and touched him on the forehead.

"Caderousse shuddered. The woman's lips seemed to move as though she were talking; but either because she spoke in an undertone, or because my senses were dulled by sleep, I did not catch a word she uttered. I could no longer even see except through a mist and with that un-

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certainty in which perceptions are blended with dreams. Finally my eyes closed, and I lost consciousness. How long I had been in this unconscious state I know not, when I was suddenly aroused by the report of a pistol followed by a fearful cry. Unsteady footsteps sounded on the floor of the chamber, and the next instant a dull, heavy weight seemed to fall powerless on the staircase. I had not yet fully recovered my recollection when again I heard groans mingled with half-stifled cries, as if from persons engaged in a deadly struggle. A last cry, more prolonged than the others, which gradually was subdued to groans, effectually aroused me from my drowsy lethargy. Hastily raising myself on one arm, I looked around, but all was dark; and it seemed to me as if the rain must have penetrated through the flooring of the room above, for some kind of moisture appeared to fall, drop by drop, upon my forehead, and when I passed my hand across my brow, I felt it wet and clammy.

"To the fearful noises that had awakened me had succeeded the most profound silence, — unbroken, save by the footsteps of a man walking about over my head. The staircase creaked under his step. The man descended to the lower room, approached the fireplace, and lighted a candle. It was Caderousse, his face pale and his shirt red with blood. Having obtained the light, he hurried upstairs again, and once more I heard his rapid and uneasy step in the chamber above. Ere long he came below holding in his hand the small shagreen case, which he opened, to assure himself it contained the diamond, and seemed to hesitate as to which pocket he should put it in; then, as if dissatisfied with the security of either pocket, he deposited it in his red handkerchief, which he carefully rolled round his head. After this he took from his cupboard the bank-notes and gold he had put there, thrust

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the one into the pocket of his trousers, and the other into that of his waistcoat, hastily tied up a small bundle of linen, and rushing towards the door, disappeared in the darkness of the night.

"Then all became clear and manifest to me; and I reproached myself with what had happened as though I myself had done the guilty deed. I fancied that I still heard faint moans; and imagining that the unfortunate jeweller might not be quite dead, I determined to go to his relief by way of atoning in some slight degree, not for the crime I had committed, but for that which I had not endeavored to prevent. For this purpose I applied all the strength I possessed to force an entrance from the cramped spot in which I lay to the adjoining room; the badly arranged planks which alone divided me from it yielded to my efforts, and I found myself in the house. Hastily snatching up the lighted candle, I hurried to the staircase; towards the middle of it I stumbled over a human body lying quite across the stairs. It was the body of La Carconte! The pistol I had heard had doubtless been discharged at the unfortunate woman, whose throat it had frightfully lacerated, leaving a gaping wound from which, as well as the mouth, the blood was welling in sanguinary streams. Finding the miserable creature past all human aid, I strode past her and ascended to the sleeping-chamber, which presented an appearance of the wildest disorder. The furniture had been knocked over in the deadly struggle that had taken place there; and the sheets, to which the unfortunate jeweller had doubtless clung, were dragged across the room. The murdered man lay on the floor, his head leaning against the wall, weltering in a gory stream, poured forth from three large wounds in his breast; in a fourth wound was a large kitchen-knife of which the handle only was visible.

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"I stumbled over the second pistol, which had not been discharged, — the powder probably being damp. I approached the jeweller, who was not quite dead; and at the sound of my footsteps, causing as they did the creaking of the floor, he opened his eyes, fixed them on me for a moment, moved his lips as though trying to speak, and expired. This appalling sight almost bereft me of my senses; and finding that I could no longer be of service to any one in the house, my only desire was to get away. I rushed to the staircase, clasping my burning temples with both hands, and uttering cries of horror. Upon reaching the room below, I found five or six custom-house officers and two or three gendarmes, — an armed troop. They immediately seized me, and I did not even attempt any resistance; I was no longer master of my senses. I tried to speak, but could utter only inarticulate cries. I saw some of the party pointing at me, and lowered my eyes to look at myself; I was covered with blood. That warm rain that I had perceived falling on me through the staircase was the blood of La Carconte. I pointed with my finger to the place where I had been concealed. 'What does he mean?' asked a gendarme. One of the revenue officers went to the place I had indicated. 'He means,' replied the man, upon his return, 'that he effected his entrance by means of this hole,' showing the place where I had broken my way through the planks into the house.

"Then I understood that they took me for an assassin. I recovered my voice and my strength. I tore myself from the two men who held me, and cried out, 'It is not I! it is not I!' A couple of gendarmes held the muzzles of their carbines against my breast; 'Stir but a step,' said they, 'and you are a dead man!' 'Why should you threaten me with death,' cried I, 'when I have already declared my innocence?' 'You will tell your little story

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to the judges at Nîmes. Meanwhile, come along with us; and the best advice we can give you is to do so unresistingly.' Resistance was far from my thoughts. I was utterly overpowered by surprise and terror; and without a word I suffered myself to be handcuffed and tied to a horse's tail, in which disgraceful plight I arrived at Nîmes.

"It seems I had been tracked by a *douanier*, who had lost sight of me near the inn; feeling assured that I intended to pass the night there, he had returned to summon his comrades, who arrived just in time to hear the report of the pistol, and to take me in the midst of such proofs of my guilt that I at once understood the difficulty I should have in proving my innocence. One only chance was left me, that of beseeching the magistrate before whom I was taken to cause every inquiry to be made for a certain Abbé Busoni, who had stopped at the inn of the Pont du Gard on the morning previous to the murder. If, indeed, Caderousse had invented the story relative to the diamond, and there existed no such person as the Abbé Busoni, then, indeed, I was lost past redemption unless Caderousse should be taken and should make a confession.

"Two months passed away in which — I ought to say in praise of my judge — search was everywhere made for the person I had desired to see. I had already lost all hope. Caderousse had not been taken. My trial was to come on at the approaching sessions; when, on the 8th of September, — that is to say, precisely three months and five days after the event, — the Abbé Busoni, whom I no longer hoped to see, presented himself at the prison, saying that he understood one of the prisoners wished to speak to him. He had learned of the affair at Marseilles, he said, and had hastened to comply with my desire. You

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may easily imagine with what eagerness I welcomed him; I related to him the whole of what I had seen and heard. I felt some degree of nervousness as I entered upon the history of the diamond; but to my inexpressible astonishment, he confirmed it in every particular, and to my equal surprise, he seemed to place entire belief in all I stated. And then it was that, won by his mild charity, perceiving him acquainted with all the habits and customs of my own country, and considering also that pardon for the only crime of which I was really guilty might come with a double power from lips so benevolent and kind, I besought him to receive my confession, under the seal of which I recounted the affair of Auteuil in all its details. That which I had done by the impulse of my best feelings produced the same effect as though it had been the result of calculation. My voluntary confession of the assassination at Auteuil proved to him that I had not committed that of which I stood accused. When he quitted me, he bade me be of good courage, and rely upon his doing all in his power to convince my judges of my innocence.

"I had speedy proofs that the excellent abbé was engaged in my behalf, for the rigors of my imprisonment were gradually alleviated, and I was told that my trial was to be postponed to the assizes following those now being held. In the interim it pleased Providence to cause the apprehension of Caderousse, who was discovered in some distant country and brought back to France, where he made a full confession, attributing to his wife the conception and instigation of the deed. He was sentenced to the galleys for life; and I was immediately set at liberty."

"And then it was, I presume," said Monte Cristo, "that you came to me as the bearer of a letter from the Abbé Busoni?"

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"It was, your Excellency; the benevolent abbé took an evident interest in all that concerned me. 'Your mode of life as a smuggler,' said he to me one day, 'will be the ruin of you if you persist in it; let me advise you when you get out of prison to choose something more safe as well as respectable.' 'But how,' inquired I, 'am I to maintain myself and my poor sister?' 'A person, whose confessor I am,' replied he, 'and who entertains a high regard for me, applied to me a short time since to procure him a confidential servant. Would you like such a post? If so, I will give you a letter of introduction to the friend I allude to.' 'Oh, *mon père*,' I cried, 'what goodness!' 'But you must swear to me that I shall never have occasion to regret my recommendation.' I extended my hand to take the oath. 'It is needless,' he said; 'I know and I like the Corsicans, — that is my reliance! Here, take this,' continued he, after rapidly writing the few lines I brought to your Excellency, and upon receipt of which you deigned to receive me into your service; and now I ask with confidence whether your Excellency has ever had cause to complain of me?"

"On the contrary, Bertuccio, I have ever found you faithful, honest, and deserving. One fault I find with you, and that is your not having placed sufficient confidence in me."

"Indeed, your Excellency, I know not what you mean!"

"Simply this; how comes it, that having both a sister and an adopted son, you have never spoken to me of either?"

"Alas! I have still to recount the most distressing period of my life. Anxious as you may suppose I was to behold and comfort my dear sister, I lost no time in hastening to Corsica; but when I arrived at Rogliano I found the house in mourning; there had been a scene so horrible

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that the neighbors remember and speak of it to this day. Acting by my advice, my poor sister had refused to comply with the unreasonable demands of Benedetto, who was continually tormenting her for money as long as he believed there was a sou left in her possession. One morning when he had demanded money, threatening her with the severest consequences if she did not supply him with what he desired, he disappeared throughout the whole of the day, leaving the kind-hearted Assunta, who loved him as if he were her own child, to weep over his conduct and bewail his absence. Evening came; and still, with all the patient solicitude of a mother, she watched for his return.

"As the eleventh hour struck, he returned with two of his ordinary companions. As poor Assunta rose to clasp her truant in her arms, she was seized upon by three ruffians, and one of them — I shudder with the fear that it may have been that infernal child — cried out, 'Let us put her to the torture; she will then tell us where the money is.'

"It unfortunately happened that our neighbor, Wasilio, was at Bastia, leaving no person in his house but his wife; no one else could hear or see anything that took place within our dwelling. Two of the brutal companions of Benedetto held poor Assunta, who, unable to conceive that any harm was intended to her, smiled upon those who were soon to become her executioners. The third ruffian proceeded to barricade the doors and windows; then returning to his infamous accomplices, the three united in stifling the cries uttered by the poor victim at the sight of these alarming preparations. This effected, they put the brazier to Assunta's feet, expecting thus to compel her to declare where our little treasure was concealed. In the struggles made by my poor sister her clothes caught fire,

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and they were compelled to let go their hold in order to preserve themselves. Covered with flames, Assunta rushed wildly to the door; but it was fastened. She flew to the windows; but they were barricaded. Then her neighbor heard frightful cries, — Assunta calling for help. Then her voice was stifled; her cries subsided to moans; and on the following morning, when after a night of anguish and terror Wasilio's wife could muster up courage to venture abroad, she caused the door of our dwelling to be opened by the public authorities, and Assunta, although dreadfully burned, was found still breathing. Every drawer and closet in the house had been forced open, and everything worth carrying off stolen from them. Benedetto never again appeared at Rogliano, neither have I since that day either seen or heard anything concerning him.

"It was subsequently to these dreadful events that I waited on your Excellency, to whom it would have been folly to have mentioned Benedetto, since all trace of him seemed entirely lost; or of my sister, since she was dead."

"And what have you thought of that event?" inquired Monte Cristo.

"That it was a punishment for the crime I had committed," answered Bertuccio. "Oh, those Villeforts are an accursed race!"

"I believe it," murmured the count, in a melancholy tone.

"And now," resumed Bertuccio, "your Excellency may perhaps be able to comprehend that this place, which I revisit for the first time, this garden, where I have killed a man, might well excite in me those disagreeable emotions of which you desired to know the cause. For, in short, I am not sure but that before me, there at my feet, lies M. de Villefort in the grave which he had dug for his child."

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"Everything, in fact, is possible," said Monte Cristo, rising from the bench on which he had been sitting; "even," he added in a low tone, "that the *procureur du roi* is not dead. The Abbé Busoni did right to send you to me; and you have also done well in relating to me your history, as it will prevent my forming any erroneous opinions concerning you in future. As for that Benedetto, who so grossly belied his name, have you never made any effort to trace out whither he has gone or what has become of him?"

"Never! If I had known where he was, instead of going to him I should have fled as from a monster. I have never heard his name mentioned by any person; I hope he is dead."

"Do not hope it, Bertuccio," said the count. "The wicked do not die so, for God seems to keep them in his care, that he may use them as instruments of his vengeance."

"So be it," said Bertuccio. "I ask only that I may never see him again. And now, Monsieur the Count," added the steward, bending humbly forward, "you know all; you are my judge on earth as the Almighty is in Heaven. Have you no words of consolation for me?"

"My good friend, I can say to you what the Abbé Busoni would say to you. Villefort, the man you killed, merited the punishment he received at your hands as a just reward for the wrongs he had done you, and it may be, for other crimes likewise. Benedetto, if still living, will become the instrument of some divine retribution, and then will be punished in his turn. As far as you yourself are concerned, I see but one point in which you are really guilty. Ask yourself wherefore, after rescuing the infant from its living grave, you did not restore it to its mother. There was the crime, Bertuccio."

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"True, Monsieur; there, as you say, I acted wickedly, for as to that I was a coward. My first duty, as soon as I had succeeded in recalling the babe to life, was to restore it to its mother; but in order to do so I must have made close and careful inquiry, which would in all probability have led to my own apprehension. And I clung to life, partly on my sister's account, and partly from that feeling of pride inborn in our hearts, which makes us wish to come off untouched and victorious in the execution of our vengeance. Perhaps, too, the natural and instinctive love of life made me wish to avoid endangering my own. Oh! I am not brave like my poor brother."

Bertuccio hid his face in his hands as he uttered these words, while Monte Cristo fixed on him a long and indescribable gaze. After a brief silence, rendered still more solemn by the time and place, the count said in a tone of melancholy wholly unlike his usual manner, "In order to end properly this conversation, which will be our last about these adventures, I will repeat to you some words I have heard from the lips of the Abbé Busoni himself; 'For all ills there are two remedies, — time and silence.' Now, M. Bertuccio, leave me to walk alone for a few moments in this garden. That which awakens painful emotion in you, an actor in that terrible scene, gives me a sensation almost pleasant and increases the value of this estate. The trees, you see, M. Bertuccio, are pleasant only as they make a shade; and the shade itself is pleasant only as it is filled with reveries and visions. Here I have bought a garden, thinking to buy a simple enclosure shut in by walls; but suddenly that enclosure becomes a garden full of ghosts, which were not mentioned in the contract. Now I like ghosts; I have never heard it said that so much harm had been done by the dead during six thousand years as is wrought by the living in one

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single day. Retire within, Bertuccio, and sleep in peace. Should your confessor be less indulgent to you in your dying moments than you found the Abbé Busoni, send for me if I am still on earth, and I will find words to soothe your soul as it makes ready to start on that rough voyage to what is called Eternity."

Bertuccio bowed respectfully and turned away, sighing heavily. When he had quite disappeared, Monte Cristo arose; and taking three or four steps onwards, he murmured, "Here, beneath this plane-tree, is where the infant's grave was dug. There is the little door opening into the garden. At this corner is the private staircase communicating with the sleeping-apartment. There will be no necessity for me to make a note of these particulars, for there before my eyes, beneath my feet, all around me, I have the plan sketched with all the living reality of truth."

After making the tour of the garden a second time, the count regained the house and re-entered his carriage; while Bertuccio, who perceived the thoughtful expression of his master's features, took his seat beside the driver without uttering a word. The carriage proceeded rapidly towards Paris.

That same evening, upon reaching his abode in the Champs Élysées, the Count of Monte Cristo went over the whole building with the air of one long acquainted with each nook or corner. Nor, although preceding the party, did he once mistake one door for another, or commit any error in choosing the proper corridor or staircase to conduct him to a place or suite of rooms he desired to visit. Ali accompanied him on this nocturnal inspection. Having given various orders to Bertuccio relative to the improvements and alterations he desired to make in the house, the count, drawing out his watch, said to the atten-

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tive Nubian, "It is half-past eleven o'clock; Haydée will soon arrive. Have the French attendants been notified?"

Ali extended his hands towards the apartments destined for the fair Greek, which were so isolated that when the door was concealed behind tapestry one might go all over the house without suspecting that in that locality were a salon and two chambers, occupied. Ali, having pointed to the apartments, counted three on the fingers of his left hand, and then, placing it beneath his head, shut his eyes and feigned to sleep.

"I understand," said Monte Cristo, well acquainted with Ali's pantomime; "you mean to tell me that three female attendants are waiting in the sleeping-chamber."

"Yes," said Ali, by repeatedly nodding his head.

"Madame will be fatigued this evening," continued Monte Cristo, "and will no doubt wish to retire to rest immediately upon her arrival. Desire the French attendants not to weary her with questions, but merely to pay their respectful duty and retire. You will also see that the Greek servants hold no communication with those of this country."

Ali bowed. Just at that moment voices were heard hailing the *concierge*. The gate opened; a carriage rolled down the avenue, and stopped at the flight of steps leading to the house. The count descended, and presented himself at the already opened carriage-door. He offered his hand to a young woman completely enveloped in a mantle of green and gold. She raised the hand extended towards her to her lips, and kissed it with a mixture of love and respect. A few words passed between them in that sonorous language in which Homer makes his gods converse. The woman spoke with an expression of deep tenderness, while the count replied with an air of gentle gravity. Preceded by Ali, who carried in his hand a

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candle of rose-colored wax, the woman, who was no other than the lovely Greek who had been Monte Cristo's companion in Italy, was conducted to her apartments, while the count retired to the pavilion reserved for himself. In another hour every light in the house was extinguished, and it might have been thought that all its inmates slept.

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CHAPTER XVI.

UNLIMITED CREDIT.

About two o'clock on the following day a *calèche*, drawn by a pair of magnificent English horses, stopped at the door of Monte Cristo, and a man dressed in a blue coat with buttons of the same color, a white waistcoat over which was displayed a massive gold chain, and brown trousers, with hair so black and descending so low over his eyebrows as to leave it doubtful whether it were not artificial, so little did its jetty glossiness assimilate with the deep wrinkles stamped on his features, — a man, in a word, who, although evidently more than fifty years of age, desired to be taken for not more than forty, bent forward from the carriage-door, on the panels of which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of a baron, and directed his groom to inquire at the porter's lodge whether the Count of Monte Cristo resided there, and if he were within. While waiting, the occupant of the carriage surveyed the house, the garden so far as he could distinguish it, and the livery of the servants who passed to and fro, with an attention so close as to be somewhat impertinent. The glance of this individual was keen, but evincing rather cunning than intelligence; his lips were straight, and so thin that as they closed they were compressed within the mouth, — in short, the size and prominence of his cheek-bones, — a never-failing proof of craftiness, — the flatness of his forehead, and the enlargement of the

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back of his skull, which extended far beyond his large and vulgarly-shaped ears, combined to give, in the eyes of a physiognomist, a character almost repulsive to the face of that man, so highly respected by the people for his magnificent horses, the enormous diamond he wore on his shirt-front, and the red ribbon extended from one buttonhole to the other of his coat.

The groom, in obedience to his orders, tapped at the window of the porter's lodge, saying, "Does not the Count of Monte Cristo live here?"

"His Excellency does reside here," replied the *concierge;* "but —" added he, glancing an inquiring look at Ali. Ali returned a sign in the negative.

"But what?" asked the groom.

"His Excellency does not receive visitors to-day."

"Then take my master's card, — M. le Baron Danglars! Be sure to give the card to the count, and say that in going to the Chamber my master came out of his way to have the honor of calling upon him."

"I do not speak to his Excellency," replied the *concierge;* "the *valet de chambre* will carry your message."

The groom returned to the carriage. "Well?" asked Danglars. The man, somewhat crestfallen by the rebuke he had received, detailed to his master all that had passed between himself and the *concierge.*

"Oh!" said the baron, "this gentleman is a prince, then, who must be called Excellency, and must not be approached but by his valet. However, it does not signify; he has a letter of credit on me, so I must see him when he requires his money."

Then, throwing himself back in his carriage, Danglars called out to his coachman, in a voice that might be heard across the road, "To the Chamber of Deputies!"

Through the blinds of his pavilion, Monte Cristo,

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warned in time, had seen the baron, and had studied him, by the aid of an excellent lorgnette, with no less scrutiny than M. Danglars himself had given to his examination of the house, the garden, and the liveries. "That fellow has a decidedly bad countenance," said the count, in a tone of disgust, as he shut up his glass into its ivory case. "How comes it that all do not retreat in aversion at sight of that flat, receding, serpent-like forehead, round, vulture-shaped head, and sharp-hooked nose, like the beak of a buzzard? Ali!" cried he, striking at the same time on the brazen gong. Ali appeared. "Summon Bertuccio!" said the count.

Almost immediately Bertuccio entered the apartment. "Did your Excellency desire to see me?" inquired he.

"I did," replied the count. "You no doubt observed the horses standing a few minutes since at the door?"

"Certainly, your Excellency; I noticed them for their remarkable beauty."

"Then how comes it," said Monte Cristo, with a frown, "that when I desired you to purchase for me the finest pair of horses to be found in Paris, there are in Paris two other horses as handsome as mine, and those horses are not in my stables?"

At the look of displeasure and the count's angry tones, Ali turned pale and held down his head. "It is not your fault, my good Ali," said the count, in the Arabic language, and in a tone of such gentleness as none would have given him credit for being capable of feeling, — "it is not your fault. You do not profess to understand the choice of English horses."

The countenance of Ali recovered its serenity.

"Permit me to assure your Excellency," said Bertuccio, "that the horses you speak of were not to be sold when I purchased yours."

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Monte Cristo shrugged his shoulders. "It seems, Monsieur the Intendant," said he, "that you have yet to learn that all things are to be sold to such as care to pay the price."

"Monsieur the Count is not, perhaps, aware that M. Danglars gave sixteen thousand livres for his horses?"

"Very well! then offer him thirty-two thousand; a banker never loses an opportunity of doubling his capital."

"Is your Excellency really in earnest?" inquired the steward.

Monte Cristo looked at his steward as if astonished at the question. "I have to pay a visit this evening," replied he. "I desire that these horses, with completely new harness, may be at the door with my carriage."

Bertuccio bowed, and was about to withdraw; but when he reached the door, he paused and said, "At what o'clock does your Excellency intend to make that visit?"

"At five o'clock," replied the count.

"I beg your Excellency's pardon," interposed the steward, in a deprecating manner, "for venturing to observe that it is already two o'clock."

"I know it," was Monte Cristo's only reply. Then turning towards Ali, he said, "Let all the horses in my stables be led before the windows of Madame, that she may select those she prefers for her carriage. Request her also to oblige me by saying whether it is her pleasure to dine with me; if so, let dinner be served in her apartments. Now leave me, and desire my *valet de chambre* to come hither."

Scarcely had Ali disappeared when the valet entered the chamber.

"M. Baptistin," said the count, "you have been in my service one year, the time I generally give myself to judge of the merits or demerits of those about me. You suit

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me very well." Baptistin bowed low. "It only remains for me to know whether I also suit you?"

"Oh, Monsieur the Count!" exclaimed Baptistin, eagerly.

"Listen, if you please, till I have finished speaking," replied Monte Cristo. "You receive fifteen hundred livres per annum for your services here, — more than many a brave subaltern, who continually risks his life for his country, obtains. You have food such as many clerks and place-men who work ten times harder than you do would wish to have. Though yourself a servant, you have other servants who take care of your linen and your clothes. Besides your fifteen hundred livres of wages, you steal from me annually, upon the purchases you make for my toilet, fifteen hundred livres besides."

"Oh, your Excellency!"

"I am not complaining, M. Baptistin; it is reasonable. Nevertheless, I desire that to be stopped. You could find nowhere else a situation such as your good fortune has given you. I do not ill-use my people; I never swear; I do not put myself in a rage; I always pardon mistakes, — never negligence or forgetfulness. My orders are generally short, but clear and precise; I prefer to repeat them twice, or even three times, rather than have them imperfectly comprehended. I am rich enough to find out all that I want to know, and I give you notice, I am very curious. If, then, I learn that you have spoken of me kindly or unkindly, commented on my actions, or watched my conduct, you will leave me at that moment. I never warn my servants more than once. You are warned; go." Baptistin bowed and was proceeding towards the door. "I forgot to mention to you," said the count, "that I lay yearly aside a certain sum for each servant in my establishment; those whom I am compelled to dismiss lose, of course, this

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money, while their portion goes to the fund accumulating for those domestics who remain with me, and among whom it will be divided at my death. You have been in my service a year; your fortune has been begun. Continue it."

This address, delivered in the presence of Ali, who stood wholly unmoved, produced an effect on M. Baptistin only to be conceived by those who have studied the character and disposition of French domestics. "I assure your Excellency," said he, "at least it shall be my study to merit your approbation in all things; and I will take M. Ali as my model."

"Pray do no such thing," replied the count, in the most frigid tone; "Ali has many faults mixed with most excellent qualities. Do not, then, take example from him, for Ali is an exception. He receives no wages; he is not a servant, — he is my slave, my dog. If he should fail in his duty I should not dismiss him, I should kill him."

Baptistin opened his eyes.

"Do you doubt it?" said Monte Cristo. He then repeated to Ali in the Arabic language what he had just been saying to Baptistin in French. The Nubian smiled assentingly to his master's words, then kneeling on one knee, respectfully kissed the hand of the count. This corroboration of the lesson he had just received put the finishing stroke to the stupefaction of M. Baptistin. The count then motioned to the *valet de chambre* to retire, and to Ali to follow him into his study, where they conversed a long time. At five o'clock the count struck thrice upon his gong. When Ali was wanted, one stroke was given; two summoned Baptistin, and three Bertuccio. The steward entered. "My horses!" said Monte Cristo.

"They are harnessed to the carriage, your Excellency. Does Monsieur the Count wish me to accompany him?"

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"No, only the coachman, Ali, and Baptistin."

The count descended to the door of his mansion, and beheld his carriage drawn by the very pair of horses he had so much admired in the morning attached to the carriage of Danglars. As he passed them he said, "They are extremely handsome certainly, and you have done well to purchase them, although you were somewhat late."

"Indeed, your Excellency, I had much difficulty in obtaining them, and they have cost a large sum of money."

"Does the sum you gave for them make the animals less beautiful?" inquired the count, shrugging his shoulders.

"Nay, if your Excellency is satisfied, all is as I could wish it. Whither does Monsieur the Count desire to be driven?"

"To the residence of M. le Baron Danglars, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin."

This conversation had passed as they stood upon the terrace, from which a flight of stone steps led to the carriage-drive. As Bertuccio was moving away, the count called him back. "I have another commission for you, M. Bertuccio," said he. "I am desirous of having an estate by the seaside in Normandy, — for instance, between Havre and Boulogne. You see I give you a wide range. It will be absolutely necessary that the place you may select have a small harbor, creek, or bay, into which my *corvette* can enter and remain at anchor. She draws only fifteen feet of water. She must be kept in constant readiness to sail immediately at whatever hour of day or night I give the signal. Make the requisite inquiries for a place of this description; and when you have met with an eligible spot, visit it, and if it possess the advantages desired, purchase it at once in your own name. The *corvette* must now, I think, be on her way to Fécamp, is she not?"

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"Certainly, your Excellency; I saw her put to sea the same evening we quitted Marseilles."

"And the yacht?"

"Was ordered to remain at Martigues."

"'T is well! I wish you to write from time to time to the captains in charge of the two vessels so as to keep them on the alert."

"And the steamboat? Has your Excellency any orders to give respecting her?"

"She is at Châlons, is she not?"

"Yes."

"The same orders as for the two sailing-vessels."

"I understand."

"When you have purchased the estate I desire, I mean to establish relays at intervals of ten leagues on the road to the north and on the road to the south."

"Your Excellency may fully depend upon me."

The count gave an approving smile, descended the terrace steps, and sprang into his carriage, which, drawn by the beautiful animals so expensively purchased, was whirled along with incredible swiftness, and stopped only before the hotel of the banker. Danglars was engaged at that moment, presiding over a railroad committee. But the meeting was nearly concluded when the name of his visitor was announced. As the count's title sounded on his ear, he rose, and addressing his colleagues, many of whom were members of one Chamber or the other, he said, "Gentlemen, I must beg you to excuse my quitting you thus; but, if you will imagine it, the house of Thomson and French, at Rome, have sent to me a certain Count of Monte Cristo, and have opened for him with me an unlimited credit. It is the drollest thing I have ever met with in the course of my extensive foreign transactions; and you may readily suppose it has roused my curiosity.

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I took the trouble this morning to call on the pretended count. If he were a true count he would n't be so rich. Monsieur was not to be seen! How does that strike you? Is n't that the style of royalty, or of a pretty woman giving herself out as Maître Monte Cristo? As for the rest, the house, situated in the Champs Élysées, and which, I am informed, belongs to him, appeared to me quite respectable. But an unlimited credit," continued Danglars, with his villanous smile, "makes the banker with whom it is opened very exacting. I hasten, then, to see our man. I think it is a hoax. But they don't know down there with whom they have to deal. He laughs best who laughs last."

Having delivered himself of this pompous address, uttered with a degree of energy that left him almost out of breath, the baron left his guests and withdrew to a salon finished in white and gold, which was much admired in the Chaussée d'Antin. He had ordered the visitor to be ushered into that room, expecting him to be overwhelmed by its dazzling splendor. He found the count standing before some copies of Albano and Fattore that had been passed off on the banker as originals, and which, though but copies, were entirely out of harmony with the gaudy gilding that covered the ceiling. The count turned as he heard the entrance of Danglars into the room. With a slight inclination of the head, Danglars signed to the count to be seated in an armchair covered with white satin embroidered with gold. The count obeyed.

"I have the honor, I presume, of addressing M. de Monte Cristo."

The count bowed. "And I am speaking to Baron Danglars, Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and Member of the Chamber of Deputies," — repeating all the titles he had found on the baron's card.

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Danglars felt all the irony contained in the address of his visitor. For a minute or two he compressed his lips as though seeking to conquer his rage ere he trusted himself to speak. Then, turning to his visitor, he said, "You will, I trust, excuse my not having called you by your title when I first addressed you, but you are aware we are living under a popular form of government, and that I am myself a representative of the liberties of the people."

"So much so," replied Monte Cristo, "that while preserving the habit of styling yourself baron, you have deemed it advisable to lay aside that of calling others by their titles."

"Upon my word," said Danglars, with affected carelessness, "I attach no sort of value to such empty distinctions; but the fact is, I was made baron, and also Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, in consequence of some services I had rendered Government, but —"

"You have relinquished your titles after the example set you by M.M. de Montmorency and Lafayette? Well, you cannot possibly choose more noble models for your conduct."

"Why," replied Danglars, embarrassed, "I do not mean to say I have altogether laid aside my titles; with the servants, for instance, — there I think it right to preserve my rank with all its outward forms."

"Yes, to your servants you are 'Monseigneur;' to journalists you are 'Monsieur;' and to your constituents 'citizen.' These are distinctions very proper under a constitutional government. I understand perfectly."

Danglars bit his lips; he saw that he was no match for Monte Cristo in an argument of this sort, and he hastened to turn to subjects more familiar to him.

"Monsieur the Count," said he, bowing, "I have re-

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ceived a letter of advice from Thomson and French, of Rome."

"I am glad to hear it, Monsieur the Baron, — for I must claim the privilege of addressing you as your servants do; it is a bad habit, acquired in countries where barons still are found, simply because they are no longer created. But as regards the letter of advice, I am charmed to find that it has reached you; it relieves me of the necessity of introducing myself, which is always embarrassing. You have, then, you say, received a letter of advice?"

"Yes," said Danglars; "but I confess that I do not quite understand it."

"Indeed?"

"And for that reason I did myself the honor of calling upon you, in order to beg you would explain some part of it to me."

"Do it now, Monsieur; I am here, and am prepared to understand you."

"Why," said Danglars, "in the letter — I believe I have it about me" — here he felt in his breast-pocket — "yes, here it is! Well, this letter gives M. le Comte de Monte Cristo unlimited credit on our house."

"And what is there that requires explaining in that simple fact, may I ask, Monsieur the Baron?"

"Nothing, Monsieur, but the word 'unlimited.'"

"Well, is n't that a French word? You know they are Anglo-Germans who wrote the letter."

"Oh, as for the composition of the letter there is nothing to say; but as regards reliability it is somewhat different."

'Is it possible," asked the count, assuming an air and tone of the utmost simplicity, — "is it possible that Thomson and French are not looked upon as safe and solvent

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bankers? The devil! that is annoying, for I have considerable property in their hands."

"Thomson and French are bankers of the highest repute," replied Danglars, with an almost mocking smile; "and it was not of their solvency or capability I spoke, but of the word 'unlimited,' which in financial affairs is so vague —"

"That it is unlimited, do you mean?" cried Monte Cristo.

"Precisely what I was about to say," said Danglars. "Now, what is vague is doubtful; and says the wise man, 'where there is doubt there is danger!'"

"Meaning to say," rejoined Monte Cristo, "that though Thomson and French may be inclined to commit acts of folly, M. le Baron Danglars is not disposed to follow their example."

"How so, Monsieur the Count?"

"Simply thus: the banking-house of Thomson and Co. sets no bounds to its engagements, while that of M. Danglars has its limits; truly, he is as wise as the sage he just now quoted."

"Monsieur!" replied the banker, drawing himself up with a haughty air, "the amount of my capital or the extent and solvency of my engagements has never yet been questioned."

"It seems, then, reserved for me," said Monte Cristo, coldly, "to be the first to do so."

"By what right?"

"By right of the explanations you have demanded, which appear to betray hesitation."

Danglars bit his lips. It was the second time he had been defeated by this man, and this time on his own ground. His mocking politeness was an affectation, and touched upon the border which is so near to impertinence.

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Monte Cristo, on the other hand, smiled with the best grace in the world, and exhibited, when he wished, a certain appearance of simplicity, which gave him many advantages.

"Well, Monsieur," resumed Danglars, after a brief silence, "I will endeavor to make myself understood by requesting you to inform me for what sum you propose to draw upon me?"

"Why, truly," replied Monte Cristo, determined not to lose an inch of the ground he had gained, "my reason for desiring an 'unlimited' credit was precisely because I did not know what amount of money I might wish to have."

The banker now thought the time had arrived for him to take the upper hand. Flinging himself back in his armchair, he said with an arrogant and purse-proud air, "Let me beg of you not to hesitate in naming your wishes. You will then be convinced that the resources of the house of Danglars, however limited, are still equal to meeting the largest demands; and were you even to require a million—"

"I beg your pardon," interposed Monte Cristo.

"I said a million," repeated Danglars, with a patronizing and pompous air.

"And what should I do with a million?" said the count. "Good heavens! Monsieur, if I wanted only a million I should n't need to open a credit for such a trifle. A million! I always carry a million in my pocket-book or in my dressing-case." And with these words Monte Cristo took from his pocket a small case containing his visiting-cards, and drew forth two orders on the treasury for five hundred thousand livres each, payable to the bearer.

It was necessary to crush, and not merely to sting a man like Danglars. The stroke of the club had its effect;

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the banker shuddered and had an attack of vertigo. He stared at Monte Cristo with stupefied eyes whose pupils were frightfully dilated.

"Come," said Monte Cristo, "confess honestly that you have not perfect confidence in the responsibility of the house of Thomson and French. It is a simple matter. I foresaw that possibility; and although not a business man, I took certain precautions. Here are two other letters like the one addressed to you, — the one from the house of Arstein and Eskeles, of Vienna, to Baron de Rothschild; the other drawn by Baring, of London, on M. Laffitte. Now, Monsieur, you have but to say the word, and I will spare you all uneasiness on the subject by presenting my letter of credit at one of those two houses."

It was all over; Danglars was conquered. He opened, trembling visibly, the letter from Germany and that from London, which the count carelessly handed to him, and verified the authenticity of the signatures with a scrutiny which would have been insulting to Monte Cristo had it not proceeded from the banker's confusion.

"Oh, Monsieur! here are three signatures which are worth many millions," said Danglars, rising to salute the power of gold personified in the man before him. "Three unlimited credits on three houses! Pardon me, Monsieur the Count, but though no longer distrustful, I cannot help being astonished."

"Oh, a house like yours is not so easily astonished," said Monte Cristo, in his politest manner. "So you will be able to send me some money, will you not?"

"Speak, Monsieur the Count; I am at your orders."

"Why," replied Monte Cristo, "since we mutually understand each other, — for such, I presume, is the case?" Danglars bowed assentingly. "You are quite sure that not a lurking doubt or suspicion lingers in your mind?"

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"Oh, Monsieur the Count!" exclaimed Danglars, "I never had any."

"No, no! you merely wished to be convinced you ran no risk, — nothing more; but now that we have come to so clear an understanding, and that all distrust and suspicion are laid at rest, we may as well fix upon a round sum for the first year, — say, six millions."

"Six millions!" gasped out Danglars. "Certainly, whatever you please."

"Then, if I should require more," continued Monte Cristo, in a careless, indifferent manner, "why, of course, I should draw upon you; but my present intention is not to remain in France more than a year, and during that period I scarcely think I shall exceed the sum I mentioned. However, we shall see. To make a beginning, please send me to-morrow five hundred thousand livres. I shall be at home until noon, and should I not be there, I will leave a receipt with my steward."

"The money you desire shall be at your house by ten o'clock to-morrow morning, Monsieur the Count," replied Danglars. "How would you like to have it, — in gold, silver, or notes?"

"Half in gold, and the other half in bank-notes, if you please," said the count, rising from his seat.

"I must confess to you, Monsieur the Count," said Danglars, "that I have hitherto imagined myself acquainted with all the great fortunes of Europe, and yet yours, which seems to be considerable, is wholly unknown to me. Is it recent?"

"No, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "it is on the contrary of very ancient date. It is a sort of treasure forbidden to be touched for a certain period of years, during which the accumulated interest has trebled the capital. The period appointed by the testator for the

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disposal of these riches occurred only a short time ago; and they have only been employed by me within the last few years. Your ignorance on the subject, therefore, is very natural. However, you will be better informed as to me and my possessions ere long." And the count, while pronouncing these latter words, accompanied them with one of those ghastly smiles that seemed so terrible to Franz d'Épinay.

"With your tastes and means of gratifying them," continued Danglars, "you will exhibit a splendor that must effectually put us poor little millionnaires quite in the background. If I mistake not, you are an admirer of paintings; at least I judged so from the attention you appeared to be bestowing on mine when I entered the room. If you will permit me, I shall be happy to show you my picture gallery, composed entirely of works by the ancient masters, — warranted as such. I cannot endure the modern school of painting."

"You are quite right in objecting to them, for they have generally one great fault, — that they have not yet had time to become old."

"Or will you allow me to show you several fine statues by Thorwaldsen, Bartoloni, and Canova, — all foreign artists? As you may perceive, I think but very indifferently of our French sculptors."

"You have a right to be unjust to them, Monsieur, — they are your countrymen."

"But all that may be postponed until we shall be better acquainted. For the present, I will confine myself, if agreeable to you, to introducing you to Madame la Baronne Danglars. Excuse my impatience, Monsieur the Count; but a person of your wealth and influence cannot receive too much attention."

Monte Cristo bowed in sign that he accepted the prof-

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fered honor, and the financier immediately rang a small bell, which was answered by a servant in a showy livery.

"Is Madame the Baroness at home?" inquired Danglars.

"Yes, Monsieur the Baron," answered the man.

"And alone?"

"No, Monsieur the Baron, Madame has visitors."

"Have you any objection to meet any persons who may be with Madame, or do you desire to preserve a strict incognito?"

"No, indeed," replied Monte Cristo, with a smile; "I do not arrogate to myself the right of so doing."

"And who is with Madame, — M. Debray?" inquired Danglars, with an air of good-nature that made Monte Cristo smile, acquainted as he was with the secrets of the banker's domestic life.

"Yes, Monsieur the Baron," replied the servant, "M. Debray is with Madame."

Danglars nodded his head, then turning to Monte Cristo, said, "M. Lucien Debray is an old friend of ours, and private secretary to the Minister of the Interior. As for my wife, I must tell you she lowered herself by marrying me, for she belongs to one of the most ancient families in France. Her maiden name was De Sevières, and her first husband was M. le Colonel Marquis de Nargonne."

"I have not the honor of knowing Madame Danglars; but I have already met M. Lucien Debray."

"Ah, indeed!" said Danglars; "and where was that?"

"At the house of M. de Morcerf."

"Oh! you are acquainted with the young viscount, are you?"

"We were together a good deal during the Carnival at Rome."

"True, true!" cried Danglars. "Let me see; have I

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not heard talk of some strange adventure with bandits or thieves hid in ruins, and of his having had a miraculous escape? I forget how; but I know he used to amuse my wife and daughter by telling them about it after his return from Italy."

"Madame the Baroness is waiting to receive you, gentlemen," said the servant, who had gone to inquire the pleasure of his mistress. "With your permission," said Danglars, bowing, "I will precede you, to show you the way."

"By all means," replied Monte Cristo; "I follow you."

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE DAPPLED GRAYS.

THE baron, followed by the count, traversed a long suite of apartments, in which the prevailing characteristics were heavy magnificence and the gaudiness of ostentatious wealth, until he reached the boudoir of Madame Danglars, — a small octagonal-shaped room, hung with pink satin covered with white Indian muslin. The chairs were of ancient workmanship and materials; over the doors were painted sketches of shepherds and shepherdesses, after the style and manner of Boucher, and at each side pretty medallions in crayons, harmonizing well with the appointments of this charming apartment, — the only one in the vast hotel in which any distinctive taste prevailed. In fact, it had been entirely overlooked in the plan arranged and followed out by M. Danglars and his architect, one of the most celebrated men of the day. The ornamental part of the finishing of Madame Danglars's boudoir had been left entirely to herself and Lucien Debray. M. Danglars, however, while possessing a great admiration for the antique as it was understood during the time of the Directory, entertained the most sovereign contempt for the simple elegance of his wife's favorite sitting-room, where, by the way, he was never permitted to intrude, unless indeed he excused his own appearance by ushering in some more agreeable visitor than himself. It was not therefore in reality Danglars who presented the visitor; on the contrary it was he who was presented. And his reception was cordial

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or frigid, in proportion as the individual who accompanied him chanced to please or displease the baroness.

As Danglars now entered, he found Madame the Baroness (who, although past the first bloom of youth, was still strikingly handsome) seated at the piano, — a most elaborate piece of cabinet and inlaid work, — while Lucien Debray, standing before a small work-table, was turning over the pages of an album. Lucien had found time, preparatory to the count's arrival, to relate many particulars respecting him to Madame Danglars. It will be remembered that Monte Cristo had made a lively impression on the minds of all the party assembled at the breakfast given by Albert de Morcerf. That impression had not yet been effaced from Debray's mind, unsusceptible though he was; and the information which he had given the baroness about the count was modified by it. The curiosity of Madame Danglars, excited by the details formerly given by Morcerf, and by the new incidents related by Lucien, had therefore risen to a great height. That arrangement of piano and album was only one of those social deceptions by which the most serious precautions are concealed. A most gracious welcome and unusual smile were bestowed on M. Danglars; the count, in return for his gentlemanly bow, received a formal though graceful courtesy, while Lucien exchanged with the count a sort of distant recognition, and with Danglars a free and easy nod.

"Baroness," said Danglars, "give me leave to present to you the Count of Monte Cristo, who has been most warmly recommended to me by my correspondents at Rome. I need but mention one fact to make all the ladies in Paris court his notice, — he comes to Paris with the intention of remaining a year and spending six millions in that time! It sounds very much like an announcement of balls, fêtes, dinners, and picnic-parties, in all of which I trust Mon-

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sieur the Count will remember us, as he may depend upon it we shall remember him in all the entertainments we may give, be they great or small."

Spite of the gross flattery and coarseness of this address, Madame Danglars could not forbear gazing with considerable interest on a man capable of expending six millions in twelve months, and who had selected Paris for the scene of his princely extravagance. "And when did you arrive here?" inquired she.

"Yesterday morning, Madame."

"Coming, as usual, I presume, from the extreme end of the globe? Pardon me; at least, such I have heard is your custom."

"Nay, Madame! this time I have come only from Cadiz."

"You have selected a most unfavorable moment for your first visit to our city. Paris is a horrible place in summer! Balls, parties, and fêtes are over; the Italian opera is in London; the French opera everywhere except in Paris. As for the Théâtre Français, you know, of course, that it is nowhere. The only amusements left us are the indifferent races held in the Champ de Mars and Satory. Do you propose entering any horses at either of these races, Monsieur the Count?"

"I, Madame, propose to do whatever people do in Paris, if I have the good fortune to find some one who will inform me as to French customs."

"Are you fond of horses, Monsieur the Count?"

"I have spent a portion of my life in the East, Madame, and you are doubtless aware that the inhabitants of those climes value only two things, — the excellence of their horses and the beauty of their women."

"Ah, Monsieur the Count," said the baroness, "it would have been somewhat more gallant to have placed the women first."

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"You see, Madame, how rightly I spoke when I said I required a preceptor to guide me into French customs."

At this instant the favorite attendant of Madame Danglars entered the boudoir; approaching her mistress, she spoke some words in an undertone. Madame Danglars turned very pale, then exclaimed, "I cannot believe it; the thing is impossible."

"I assure you, Madame," replied the woman, "it is even as I have said."

Turning impatiently towards her husband, Madame Danglars demanded, "Is this true?"

"Is what true, Madame?" inquired Danglars, visibly agitated.

"What my maid tells me."

"But what does she tell you?"

"That when my coachman was about to prepare my carriage he discovered that the horses had been removed from the stables without his knowledge. I desire to know what is the meaning of this?"

"Be kind enough, Madame, to listen to me."

"Oh! I will listen to you, Monsieur, for I am curious to know what you are about to tell me. These two gentlemen shall decide between us; but first I will state the case to them. Gentlemen," continued the baroness, "among the ten horses in the stables of M. le Baron Danglars are two that belong exclusively to me, — a pair of the handsomest and most spirited creatures to be found in Paris. But to you, at least, M. Debray, I need not give a further description, because to you my beautiful pair of dappled grays were well known. Well! just when I have promised Madame de Villefort the loan of my carriage to drive to-morrow to the Bois de Boulogne, behold, the two horses have disappeared. No doubt M. Danglars has sacrificed them to the selfish consideration of gaining some

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thousands of paltry livres. Oh, what a villanous crowd these speculators are!"

"Madame," replied Danglars, "the horses were not sufficiently quiet for you; they were scarcely four years old, and they made me extremely uneasy on your account."

"Nonsense!" retorted the baroness; "you are well aware that I have had in my service for the past month the best coachman in Paris, — unless you have sold him with the horses?"

"My dear, I promise you another pair like them, — handsomer, if possible, — but more quiet and steady."

The baroness shrugged her shoulders with an air of ineffable contempt, while her husband, affecting not to observe it, turned towards Monte Cristo and said, "Upon my word, Monsieur the Count, I am quite sorry I was not sooner aware of your establishing yourself in Paris."

"And wherefore?" asked the count.

"Because I should have liked to make you the offer of these horses. I have almost given them away as it is; but, as I said, I was anxious to get rid of them. They were fit only for a young man."

"Monsieur," said the count, "I thank you; but this morning I purchased a very excellent pair of carriage-horses, sufficiently good, and not too dear. There they are. Come, M. Debray, you are a connoisseur, I believe, let me have your opinion upon them."

As Debray walked towards the window Danglars approached his wife. "I could not tell you before others," said he, in a low tone, "the reason of my parting with the horses; but an enormous price was offered me this morning for them. Some madman or fool, bent upon ruining himself as fast as he can, actually sent his steward to me to purchase them at any cost; and the fact is, I have gained sixteen thousand livres by the sale of them. Come,

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don't look so angry, and you shall have four thousand livres of the money to do what you like with, and Eugénie shall have two thousand." Madame Danglars surveyed her husband with a look of withering contempt.

"What do I see?" suddenly exclaimed Debray.

"Where?" asked the baroness.

"I cannot be mistaken; there are your horses! The very animals we were speaking of, harnessed to the count's carriage!"

"My dappled grays?" cried the baroness, springing to the window. "'T is indeed they!" said she. Danglars was stupefied.

"Is it possible?" cried Monte Cristo, with well-feigned astonishment.

Madame Danglars whispered a few words in the ear of Debray, who approached Monte Cristo, saying, "The baroness wishes to know what you paid her husband for the horses."

"I scarcely know," replied the count; "it was a little surprise prepared for me by my steward. They cost, I think, about thirty thousand livres."

Debray conveyed the count's reply to the baroness. Danglars looked so crestfallen and discomfited that Monte Cristo assumed a pitying air towards him. "See," said he, "how very ungrateful women are! Your kind attention in providing for the safety of the baroness by disposing of the horses does not seem to have made the least impression on her. But so it is; a woman will often from mere wilfulness prefer that which is dangerous to that which is safe. Therefore in my opinion, my dear baron, the best and easiest way is to leave them to their fancies, and allow them to act as they please; and then if any mischief follows, why, at least, they have no one to blame but themselves."

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Danglars made no reply; he was occupied in anticipations of the coming scene between himself and the baroness, whose threatening looks and frowning brow, like that of Olympic Jove, predicted a storm. Debray, who perceived the gathering clouds and felt no desire to witness the explosion of Madame Danglars's rage, suddenly recollected an appointment which compelled him to take his leave; while Monte Cristo, unwilling by prolonging his stay to destroy the advantages he hoped to obtain, made a farewell bow and departed, leaving Danglars to endure the angry reproaches of his wife.

"Excellent!" murmured Monte Cristo to himself, as he retraced the way to his carriage. "All has gone according to my wishes. The domestic peace of this family is henceforth in my hands. Now, then, to play another master-stroke, by which I shall gain the heart of both husband and wife, — delightful! Still," added he, "amid all this, I have not yet been presented to Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars, whose acquaintance I should have been glad to make. But never mind," pursued he, with his peculiar smile; "that will come later. I am on the spot and have plenty of time before me."

With that reflection the count entered his carriage and returned home. Two hours afterwards Madame Danglars received a charming letter from the count, in which he entreated her to receive back her favorite dappled grays, protesting that he could not endure the idea of making his *début* in the Parisian world by disappointing a lovely woman. The horses were sent back, wearing the same harness they had worn in the morning; but in the centre of each of the rosettes worn on the heads of the animals a diamond had been placed by order of the count.

To Danglars Monte Cristo also wrote, requesting him to excuse the whimsical gift of a capricious millionnaire, and

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to beg of Madame the Baroness to pardon the Eastern fashion adopted in the return of the horses.

During the evening, Monte Cristo quitted Paris for Auteuil, accompanied by Ali. The following day, about three o'clock, a single blow struck on the gong summoned Ali to the presence of the count.

"Ali," observed his master, as the Nubian entered the chamber, "you have frequently told me how skilful you are in throwing the lasso."

Ali drew himself up proudly, and returned a sign in the affirmative.

"Very well. With your lasso you could stop an ox?"

Ali repeated his affirmative gesture.

"Or a tiger?"

Ali bowed his head in token of assent.

"A lion?"

Ali made the movement of one throwing a lasso, and then imitated the sound of strangling.

"I understand," said Monte Cristo; "you wish to tell me you have hunted the lion?"

Ali smiled with a triumphant air.

"But do you believe you could arrest the progress of two horses running away?"

The Nubian smiled.

"It is well," said Monte Cristo. "Ere long a carriage will dash past here, drawn by the pair of dappled gray horses you saw me with yesterday; now, at the risk of your own life you must manage to stop those horses before my door."

Ali descended to the street, and marked a straight line on the pavement immediately at the entrance of the house; then he returned and showed the line to the count, who was watching him. The count patted him gently on the back, his usual mode of praising Ali, who, pleased and gratified with the commission assigned him, walked calmly

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towards a projecting stone forming the angle of the street and house, and seating himself thereon began to smoke his chibouque, while Monte Cristo re-entered his dwelling without further concern. But as five o'clock approached and the carriage was momentarily expected by the count, the indication of more than common impatience and uneasiness might be observed in his manner. He stationed himself in a room commanding a view of the street, pacing the chamber with restless steps, stopping from time to time to listen for the sound of approaching wheels, then to cast an anxious glance on Ali; but the regularity with which the Nubian puffed forth the smoke of his chibouque proved that he at least was wholly absorbed in the enjoyment of his favorite occupation. Suddenly a distant sound of rapidly advancing wheels was heard, and almost immediately a carriage appeared, drawn by a pair of wild, ungovernable horses, who rushed forward as though urged by the Devil himself, while the terrified coachman strove in vain to restrain their furious speed.

In the vehicle was a young woman and a child of about seven or eight years of age. Terror seemed to have deprived them even of the power to utter a cry, and they were clasped in each other's arms, as though determined not to be parted by death itself. The carriage creaked and rattled as it flew over the rough stones; and had it encountered the slightest impediment to its progress, it must inevitably have upset. The carriage kept the middle of the street, and cries of terror were uttered by those who saw it coming.

Then Ali, laying down his chibouque, drew the lasso from his pocket, threw it so skilfully as to catch the forelegs of the near horse in its triple fold, suffered himself to be dragged on for a few steps, by which time the tightening of the well-cast lasso had so completely hampered the

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furious animal as to bring it to the ground; the horse fell on the pole and broke it, and prevented the other animal from pursuing his headlong way. Gladly availing himself of this opportunity, the coachman leaped from his box; but Ali had promptly seized the nostrils of the second horse, and held them in his iron grasp, till the maddened beast, snorting with pain, sank beside his companion. All this was achieved in much less time than is occupied in the recital. The brief space had, however, been sufficient for a man, followed by a number of servants, to rush from the house before which the accident had occurred. As the coachman opened the door of the carriage, this man assisted to alight from it a lady who was convulsively grasping the cushions with one hand, while with the other she pressed to her bosom her young companion, who had lost all consciousness of what was passing. Monte Cristo carried them both to the salon, and deposited them on a sofa. "Compose yourself, Madame," said he; "all danger is over."

The woman looked up at these words, and with a glance far more expressive than any entreaties could have been, pointed to her child, who still continued insensible.

"I understand the nature of your alarm, Madame," said the count, carefully examining the child; "but I assure you there is not the slightest occasion for uneasiness. Your little charge has not received the least injury; his insensibility is merely the effect of terror, and will soon cease."

"Are you quite sure you do not say so to tranquillize my fears? See how pale he is! My child! my Édouard! speak to your mother! Ah, Monsieur, send for a doctor! My fortune to him who restores to me my son!"

Monte Cristo signed to the distracted mother to lay aside her apprehensions; then opening a casket that stood near,

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he drew forth a phial composed of Bohemian glass, containing a liquid of the color of blood, of which he let fall a single drop on the child's lips. Scarcely had it reached them ere the boy, though still pale as marble, opened his eyes, and eagerly gazed round him. At this sight, the delight of the mother was almost a delirium. "Where am I?" she exclaimed; "and to whom am I indebted for so happy a termination to my late dreadful alarm?"

"Madame," answered the count, "you are under the roof of one who esteems himself most fortunate in having been able to save you from a continuance of your sufferings."

"My wretched curiosity has brought all this about," pursued the lady. "All Paris rang with the praises of Madame Danglars's beautiful horses, and I had the folly to wish to try them."

"Is it possible," exclaimed the count, with well-feigned astonishment, "that these horses belong to Madame the Baroness?"

"Yes, Monsieur; do you know her?"

"Madame Danglars? I have that honor; and my happiness at your escape from the danger that threatened you is redoubled by the consciousness that I have been the unwilling and unintentional cause of all the peril you have incurred. I yesterday purchased these horses of the baron; but as the baroness evidently regretted parting with them, I ventured to send them back to her, with a request that she would gratify me by accepting them from my hands."

"Why, then you are the Count of Monte Cristo of whom Hermine has talked to me so much!"

"Yes, Madame," replied the count.

"And I am Madame Héloïse de Villefort." The count bowed with the air of a person who hears a name for the

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first time. "How grateful will M. de Villefort be for all your goodness; how thankfully will he acknowledge that to you alone it is owing that his wife and child exist! Most certainly, but for the prompt assistance of your intrepid servant this dear child and myself must both have perished."

"Indeed, I still shudder at your peril."

"Oh, I hope you will allow me properly to recompense that man's devoted courage."

"I beseech you, Madame," replied Monte Cristo, "not to spoil Ali, either by too great praise or rewards. I cannot allow him to acquire the habit of expecting to be recompensed for every trifling service he may render. Ali is my slave, and in saving your life he was but discharging his duty to me."

"But he risked his life!" said Madame de Villefort, on whom the count's authoritative manner made a deep impression.

"His life, Madame, belongs not to him; it is mine, in return for my having myself saved him from death." Madame de Villefort was silent; perhaps she was absorbed in the contemplation of the singular individual who from the first had made so powerful an impression on her. During that interval of silence Monte Cristo scrutinized the features and appearance of the boy she kept folded in her arms, lavishing on him the most tender endearments. The child was small for his age, and unnaturally pale. A mass of straight black hair, defying all attempts to train or curl it, fell over his projecting forehead, and hung down to his shoulders, giving increased vivacity to eyes full of sly malice and juvenile wickedness. His mouth was large, and the lips, which had not yet regained their color, were particularly thin; in fact, the deep and crafty look, forming the principal character of the child's face, belonged

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rather to a boy of twelve or fourteen years of age than to one so young. His first movement was to free himself by a violent push from the encircling arms of his mother, and to rush forward to the casket from which the count had taken the phial of elixir; then, without asking permission of any one, he proceeded in all the wilfulness of a spoiled child unaccustomed to restrain either whims or caprices to pull the corks out of the bottles.

"Touch nothing, my little friend," cried the count, eagerly; "some of those liquids are dangerous not only to taste, but even to smell."

Madame de Villefort became very pale, and seizing her son's arm, drew him towards her; but once satisfied of his safety, she also cast a brief but expressive glance on the casket, which was not lost upon the count. At this moment Ali entered. At sight of him Madame de Villefort uttered an expression of pleasure, and holding the child still closer towards her, she said, "Édouard, do you see that good man? He has shown very great courage and resolution, for he exposed his own life to stop the horses that were running away with us, and would certainly have dashed the carriage to pieces. Thank him, then, my child,—for had he not come to our aid, neither you nor I would be alive at this moment."

The child stuck out his lips and turned away his head in a disdainful and contemptuous manner, saying, "He's too ugly!"

The count witnessed all this with internal satisfaction, and a smile stole over his features as he thought that such a child bade fair to realize one part of his hopes; while Madame de Villefort reprimanded her son with a moderation which certainly would not have satisfied Jean Jacques Rousseau had the little Édouard been called Émile.

"This lady," said the count, speaking to Ali in the

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Arabic language, "is desirous that her son should thank you for saving both their lives; but the boy refuses, saying you are too ugly!"

Ali turned his intelligent countenance towards the boy, on whom he gazed without any apparent emotion; but the spasmodic working of the nostrils showed to the practised eye of Monte Cristo how deeply the Arab was wounded by the unfeeling remark.

"Will you permit me to inquire," said Madame de Villefort, as she rose to take her leave, "whether you usually reside here?"

"No, Madame," replied Monte Cristo; "it is a small place I have purchased quite lately. My place of abode is No. 30 Avenue des Champs Élysées; but I see that you have quite recovered from your fright, and you are no doubt desirous of returning home. Anticipating your wishes, I have desired the same horses you came with to be put to one of my carriages, and Ali — he whom you think so very ugly" — continued he, addressing the boy with a smiling air, "will have the honor of driving you home, while your coachman remains here to attend to the necessary repairs of your *calèche*. As soon as that important business is concluded, I will have a couple of my own horses harnessed to convey it direct to Madame Danglars."

"But I dare not return with those dreadful horses," said Madame de Villefort.

"You will see," replied Monte Cristo, "that in the hands of Ali they will be gentle and docile as lambs."

Ali had indeed given proof of this, — for approaching the animals, who had been raised to their feet with considerable difficulty, with a sponge soaked in aromatic vinegar he rubbed their foreheads and nostrils, covered with sweat and foam; and almost immediately they began to breathe noisily, and a shudder, lasting several seconds,

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passed over their bodies. Then, undisturbed by the noisy crowd collected round the broken carriage, Ali quietly harnessed the pacified animals to the count's chariot, took the reins in his hands, and mounted the box; when lo! to the utter astonishment of those who had witnessed the ungovernable spirit and maddened velocity of the same horses, he was actually compelled to apply his whip in no very gentle manner ere he could induce them to start. And even then all that could be obtained from the celebrated dappled grays, now changed into a couple of dull, sluggish, stupid brutes, was a slow, pottering pace, kept up with so much difficulty that Madame de Villefort was more than two hours returning to her residence in the Faubourg St. Honoré. As soon as she arrived and had satisfied the first emotions of the family, she wrote the following letter to Madame Danglars: —

Dear Hermine, — I have just had a wonderful escape from the most imminent danger; and I owe my safety to the very Count of Monte Cristo we were talking about yesterday, but whom I little expected to see to-day. I remember how unmercifully I laughed at what I considered your eulogistic and exaggerated praises of him; but I have now ample cause to admit that your enthusiastic description of this wonderful man fell far short of his merits. But I must endeavor to render the account of my adventures somewhat more intelligible. You must know, then, my dear friend, that when I had proceeded with your horses as far as Ranelagh, they darted forward like mad things and galloped away at so fearful a rate that there seemed no other prospect for myself and my poor Édouard but that of being dashed to pieces against the first object that impeded their progress, when a strange-looking man, —an Arab or a Nubian, at least a black of some nation or other, —at a signal from the count, whose domestic he is, suddenly seized and stopped the infuriated animals, even at the risk of being trampled to death himself; and certainly he had a most wonderful escape. The count then hastened to us and carried

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us into his house, where by some skilful application he speedily recalled my poor Édouard (who was quite insensible from terror) to life. When we were sufficiently recovered he sent us home in his own carriage. Yours will be returned to you to-morrow. I am afraid you will not be able to use your horses for some days; they seem thoroughly stupefied, as if sulky and vexed at having allowed this black servant to conquer them. The count, however, has commissioned me to assure you that two or three days' rest, with plenty of barley for their sole food during that time, will bring them back to a condition as flourishing — that is to say, as frightful — as they were in yesterday. Adieu! I cannot return you many thanks for the drive to-day; but after all, I ought not to blame you for the misconduct of your horses, more especially as it procured me the pleasure of an introduction to the Count of Monte Cristo; and certainly that illustrious individual, apart from the millions at his disposal, seemed to me a problem so curious and so interesting that I intend to study it at all hazards, — even at the hazard, if necessary, of another ride behind your horses. Édouard has supported the accident with admirable courage. He did not utter a single cry, but fell lifeless into my arms; nor did a tear fall from his eyes after it was over. You will still say that I am blinded by maternal affection; but there is a soul of iron in that poor little body so frail and delicate. Valentine sends many affectionate remembrances to your dear Eugénie, and with best love to her and yourself, I remain,

Ever yours truly,

HÉLOÏSE DE VILLEFORT.

P. S. — Do contrive some way for my meeting the Count of Monte Cristo at your house. I must see him again. I have just made M. de Villefort promise to call on him, and expect that he will return the call.

Nothing was talked of throughout the evening but the adventure at Auteuil. Albert related it to his mother; Château-Renaud recounted it at the Jockey Club; and Debray detailed it at length in the salons of the minister;

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even Beauchamp accorded twenty lines in his journal to the relation of the count's courage and gallantry, which exhibited him as a hero before the eyes of all the fair members of the aristocracy of France. Many persons left their names at the hotel of Madame de Villefort with the design of renewing their visit at the right moment to hear from her lips all the circumstances of this romantic adventure. As Héloïse had predicted, M. de Villefort put on a black suit and a pair of white gloves, and ordered the servants attending the carriage to be dressed in their full livery, and forthwith drove to the hotel of the count, situated, as the reader is already informed, in the Avenue des Champs Élysées.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

IDEOLOGY.

If the Count of Monte Cristo had lived for a very long time in Parisian society, he would have fully appreciated the significance of the step which M. de Villefort had taken. Standing well at court, whether the king regnant was of the elder or younger branch, whether the Government was Doctrinaire, Liberal, or Conservative; esteemed clever by all, just as we generally esteem those clever who have never experienced a political check; hated by many, but warmly protected by others, without being really liked by anybody, — M. de Villefort held a high position in the magistracy, and maintained his eminence like a Harlay or a Molé. His drawing-room, regenerated by a young wife, and a daughter by his first marriage scarcely eighteen, was still one of those well-regulated Paris salons where the worship of traditional customs and the observance of rigid etiquette were carefully maintained. A freezing politeness; a strict fidelity to government principles; a profound contempt for theories and theorists; a deep-seated hatred of ideality, — these were the elements of private and public life displayed by M. de Villefort.

M. de Villefort was not only a magistrate, he was almost a diplomatist. His relations with the ancient court, of which he always spoke with dignity and respect, made him respected by the new one; and he knew so many things that not only was he always carefully considered, but sometimes consulted. Perhaps this would not have

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been so had it been possible to get rid of M. de Villefort; but like the feudal barons who rebelled against their sovereign, he dwelt in an impregnable fortress. This fortress was his post as *procureur du roi*, all the advantages of which he worked out marvellously, and which he would not have resigned but to be made Deputy, and thus to substitute opposition for neutrality. Ordinarily, M. de Villefort made and returned very few visits. His wife visited for him; and this was the received thing in the world, where they assigned to the heavy and multifarious occupations of the magistrate what was really only a calculation of pride, the essence of aristocracy, — in fact, the application of the axiom, "Pretend to think well of yourself and the world will think well of you," an axiom a hundred times more useful in our society than that of the Greeks, "Know thyself," — a knowledge for which we have substituted the less difficult and more advantageous science of knowing others.

For his friends M. de Villefort was a powerful protector; for his enemies he was a silent but bitter enemy; for those who were neither the one nor the other he was a statue of the law made man. With a haughty air, immovable countenance, look steady and impenetrable, or else insultingly piercing and inquiring, — such was the man for whom four revolutions, skilfully piled one on the other, had first constructed and afterwards cemented the pedestal on which his fortune was erected. M. de Villefort had the reputation of being the least curious and the least wearisome man in France. He gave a ball every year, at which he appeared for a quarter of an hour only, — that is to say, five and forty minutes less than the king is visible at his balls. He was never seen at the theatres, at concerts, or in any place of public resort. Occasionally, but seldom, he played at whist; and then

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care was taken to select partners worthy of him, — some ambassador, archbishop, prince, president, or some dowager duchess. Such was the man whose carriage had just now stopped before the Count of Monte Cristo's door. The *valet de chambre* announced M. de Villefort at the moment when the count, leaning over a large table, was tracing on a map the route from St. Petersburg to China.

The *procureur du roi* entered with the same grave and measured step with which he would have entered a court of justice. He was the same man, or rather the completion of the same man, whom we have heretofore seen as deputy *procureur* at Marseilles. Nature, following up her principles, had changed nothing for him in the course she had marked out for him. From slender he had become meagre; from pale, yellow; his deep-set eyes were now hollow; and his gold spectacles, as they shielded his eyes, seemed to make a portion of his face. All his costume was black, with the exception of his white cravat; and this funereal appearance was varied only by the slight line of red ribbon which passed almost imperceptibly through his button-hole, and which appeared like a streak of blood traced with a pencil. Although master of himself, Monte Cristo scrutinized with irrepressible curiosity the magistrate, whose salute he returned, and who distrustful by habit and especially incredulous as to social marvels, was much more disposed to see in the noble stranger, as Monte Cristo was already called, a *chevalier d'industrie* who had come to try new ground, or some malefactor who had broken his prescribed limits, than a prince of the Holy See, or a sultan of the "Arabian Nights."

"Monsieur," said Villefort, in the tone assumed by magistrates in their oratorical periods, and of which they cannot or will not divest themselves in society, — "Monsieur, the signal service which you yesterday rendered to

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my wife and son has made it my duty to offer you my thanks. Allow me, therefore, to discharge this duty and to express to you all my gratitude." And as he said this, the severe eye of the magistrate had lost nothing of its habitual arrogance. These words he articulated in the voice of a *procureur-général*, with the rigid inflexibility of neck and shoulders which caused his flatterers to say that he was a living statue of the law.

"Monsieur," replied the count, with icy coldness, "I am very happy to have been the means of preserving a son to his mother, — for they say that the sentiment of maternity is the most holy of all; and the good fortune which occurred to me, Monsieur, might have enabled you to dispense with a duty which in its discharge confers an undoubtedly great honor, — for I am aware that M. de Villefort is not lavish of the favor he bestows on me, but which, however estimable, is unequal to the satisfaction which I internally experience."

Villefort, astonished at this reply which he by no means expected, started like a soldier who feels a blow upon the armor he wears; and a curl of his disdainful lip indicated that from that moment he noted in the tablets of his brain that the Count of Monte Cristo was by no means a civil gentleman. He glanced around for something on which to resume the fallen conversation, which in falling seemed to have broken in pieces. He saw the map which Monte Cristo had been examining when he entered, and said, "You seem geographically engaged, Monsieur. It is a rich study, especially for you, who, as I learn, have seen as many lands as are delineated on this map."

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the count; "I have sought to make on the human race, taken as a mass, what you practise every day on individuals, — a physiological study. I have believed it was much easier to descend from the whole

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to a part than to ascend from a part to the whole. It is an algebraic axiom which directs us to proceed from the known to the unknown, and not from the unknown to the known; but sit down, Monsieur, I beg of you."

Monte Cristo pointed to a chair, which the *procureur du roi* was obliged to take the trouble to move forward himself while the count merely fell back into his own, on which he had been kneeling when M. de Villefort entered. Thus the count was half-way turned towards his visitor, having his back towards the window, his elbow resting on the geographical chart which afforded the conversation for the moment,—a conversation which assumed, as had those with Danglars and Morcerf, a turn adapted to the persons if not to the situation.

"Ah, you philosophize," replied Villefort, after a moment's silence, during which, like a wrestler who encounters a powerful opponent, he took breath; "well, Monsieur, really, if like you I had nothing else to do, I should seek a more amusing occupation."

"Why, in truth, Monsieur," was Monte Cristo's reply, "man is but an ugly caterpillar for him who studies him through a solar microscope; but you said, I think, that I had nothing else to do. Now, really, let me ask, Monsieur, have you? Do you believe you have anything to do; or to speak in plain terms, do you think that what you do deserves being called anything?"

Villefort's astonishment redoubled at this second thrust so forcibly made by his strange adversary. It was a long time since the magistrate had heard a paradox so strong, or rather to say the truth more exactly, it was the first time he had ever heard of it. The *procureur du roi* exerted himself to reply. "Monsieur," he responded, "you are a stranger, and I believe you say yourself that a portion of your life has been spent in Oriental countries; so

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that you are not aware how human justice, so expeditious in barbarous countries, takes with us a prudent and well-studied course."

"Oh, yes, — yes, I am, Monsieur; it is the *pede claudo* of the ancients. I know all that, for it is with the justice of all countries especially that I have occupied myself. It is the criminal procedure of all nations that I have compared with natural justice; and I must say, Monsieur, that it is the law of primitive nations, — that is, the law of retaliation, — that I have most frequently found to be according to the law of God."

"If this law were adopted, sir," said the *procureur du roi*, "it would greatly simplify our legal codes; and in that case the magistrates would not, as you have just observed, have much to do."

"It may perhaps come to this in time," observed Monte Cristo. "You know that human inventions march from the complex to the simple; and simplicity is always perfection."

"In the mean while," continued the magistrate, "our codes are in full force, with all their contradictory enactments derived from Gallic customs, Roman laws, and Frank usages, — the knowledge of all which, you will agree, is not to be acquired without lengthened labor; and it requires a tedious study to acquire this knowledge, and when it is acquired, a strong power of brain is necessary in order to retain it."

"I agree with you entirely, Monsieur; but all that even you know with respect to the French code, I know, not only in reference to that code, but as regards the codes of all nations. The English, Turkish, Japanese, Hindu laws are as familiar to me as the French laws; and thus I was right when I said to you that relatively — you know that everything is relative, Monsieur — that relatively to what

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I have done, you have very little to do; but that relatively to all I have learned, you have yet a great deal to learn."

"But with what motive have you learned all this?" inquired Villefort, astonished.

Monte Cristo smiled. "Really, sir," he observed, "I see that in spite of the reputation which you have acquired as a superior man, you contemplate everything in the material and vulgar view of society, beginning with man and ending with man, — that is to say, in the most restricted, most narrow view which it is possible for human understanding to embrace."

"Pray, Monsieur, explain yourself," said Villefort, more and more astonished; "I really do — not — understand you — perfectly."

"I say, Monsieur, that with the eyes fixed on the social organization of nations, you see only the springs of the machine, and lose sight of the sublime Artisan who makes them act; I say that you do not recognize before you and around you any but those place-men whose brevets have been signed by the minister or the king; and that the men whom God has put above those titulars, ministers, and kings, by giving them a mission to follow out, instead of a post to fill, — I say that they escape your narrow view. It is thus that human weakness fails, from its debilitated and imperfect organs. Tobias took the angel who restored him to sight for an ordinary young man; the nations took Attila, who was doomed to destroy them, for a conqueror similar to other conquerors; and it was necessary for both to reveal their missions, that they might be known and acknowledged. One was compelled to say, 'I am the angel of the Lord;' and the other, 'I am the hammer of God,' in order that the divine essence in both might be revealed."

"Then," said Villefort, more and more amazed, and

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really supposing he was speaking to a mystic or a madman, "you consider yourself as one of those extraordinary beings whom you have mentioned?"

"And why not?" said Monte Cristo, coldly.

"Your pardon, Monsieur," replied Villefort, quite astounded; "but you will excuse me if when I presented myself to you, I was unaware that I should meet with a person whose knowledge and understanding so far surpass the usual knowledge and understanding of men. It is not usual with us, corrupted wretches of civilization, to find gentlemen like yourself, possessors, as you are, of immense fortune, — at least, so it is said; and I beg you to observe that I do not inquire, I merely repeat, — it is not usual, I say, for such privileged and wealthy beings to waste their time in social speculations or in philosophical reveries, fitted at best to console those whom fate has deprived of the good things of this world."

"Really, Monsieur," retorted the count, "have you attained the eminent situation in which you are, without having admitted, or even without having met with exceptional beings; and do you never use your eyes, which must have acquired so much skill and certainty, to divine at a glance the kind of man who has come before you? Should not a magistrate be not merely the best administrator of the law, not merely the most crafty expounder of the chicanery of his profession, but a steel probe to search hearts, a touchstone to try the gold which in each soul is mingled with more or less of alloy?"

"Monsieur," said Villefort, "upon my word, you overcome me. I never heard a person speak as you do."

"Because you remain eternally encircled in a round of general conditions, and have never dared to raise your wing into those upper spheres which God has peopled with invisible or exceptional beings."

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"And you allow then, Monsieur, that those spheres exist, and that these exceptional and invisible beings mingle with us?"

"Why should they not? Can you see the air you breathe, and without which you could not for a moment exist?"

"Then we do not see those beings to whom you allude?"

"Yes, we do; you see them whenever God pleases to allow them to assume a material form. You touch them, come in contact with them, speak to them, and they reply to you."

"Ah!" said Villefort, smiling, "I confess I should like to be warned when one of these beings is in contact with me."

"You have been served as you desire, Monsieur, for you have been warned just now, and I now again warn you."

"Then you yourself are one of these marked beings?"

"Yes, Monsieur; and I believe that until now no man has found himself in a position similar to mine. The dominions of kings are limited either by mountains or rivers, or a change of manners, or an alteration of language. My kingdom is bounded only by the world, — for I am neither an Italian nor a Frenchman nor a Hindu nor an American nor a Spaniard; I am a cosmopolite. No country can say it saw my birth; God alone knows what country will see me die. I adopt all customs, speak all languages. You believe me to be a Frenchman, for I speak French with the same facility and purity as yourself. Well, Ali, my Nubian, believes me to be an Arab; Bertuccio, my steward, takes me for a Roman; Haydée, my slave, thinks me a Greek. You may therefore comprehend that being of no country, asking no protection from any government, acknowledging no man as my brother, not one of the scruples that arrest the powerful, or the obstacles which

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paralyze the weak, paralyzes or arrests me. I have only two adversaries, — I will not say two conquerors, for with perseverance I subdue even them, — they are time and space. There is a third, and the most terrible, — that is, my condition as a mortal being. This alone can stop me in my onward career, and before I have attained the goal at which I aim; all the rest I have taken into account. What men call the chances of fate, — namely, ruin, change, circumstances, — I have anticipated them all; and if any of these should overtake me, yet they will not overwhelm me. Unless I die, I shall always be what I am; and therefore it is that I utter the things you have never heard, even from the mouths of kings, — for kings have need of you, and other persons fear you. For who is there who does not say to himself in a society as incongruously organized as ours, 'Perhaps some day I shall have to do with the *procureur du roi*'?"

"But must you not say that, Monsieur? — for the moment you become an inhabitant of France, you are naturally subjected to the French law."

"I know it, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "but when I visit a country, I begin to study, by all the means which are available, the men from whom I may have anything to hope or to fear, until I know them as well, perhaps better, than they know themselves. It follows from this that the *procureur du roi*, be he who he may, with whom I should have to deal would assuredly be more embarrassed than I should."

"That is to say," replied Villefort, with hesitation, "that human nature being weak, every man according to your creed has committed — faults."

"Faults or crimes," responded Monte Cristo, with a negligent air.

"And that you alone among men, whom you do not

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recognize as your brothers, — for you have said so," observed Villefort, in a tone that faltered somewhat, — "you alone are perfect."

"No, not perfect," was the count's reply; "impenetrable, that 's all. But let us leave off this strain, sir, if the tone of it is displeasing to you; I am no more disturbed by your justice than you are by my second-sight."

"No, no, by no means," said Villefort, who was afraid of seeming to abandon his ground. "No; by your brilliant and almost sublime conversation you have elevated me above the ordinary level. We no longer talk; we discourse. But you know how the theologians in their collegiate chairs, and philosophers in their controversies, occasionally say cruel truths. Let us suppose for the moment that we are discussing social theology and theological philosophy; I will say to you, rude as it may seem, 'My brother, you sacrifice greatly to pride; you may be above others, but above you there is God.'"

"Above us all, Monsieur," was Monte Cristo's response, in a tone and with an emphasis so deep that Villefort involuntarily shuddered. "I have my pride for men, — serpents always ready to erect themselves against every one who may pass without crushing them. But I lay aside that pride before God, who has taken me from nothing to make me what I am."

"Then, Monsieur the Count, I admire you," said Villefort, who for the first time in this strange conversation applied that aristocratic formula to the unknown personage, whom, until now, he had only called *Monsieur*. "Yes; and I say to you, if you are really strong, really superior, really holy, — or impenetrable, which you were right in saying amounts to the same thing, — be arrogant, Monsieur, that is the characteristic of predominance. But you have unquestionably some ambition."

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"I have had one, Monsieur."

"And what was it?"

"I too, as happens to every man once in his life, have been taken by Satan upon the highest mountain in the earth; and when there he showed me all the kingdoms of the earth, and as he said before, so said he to me, 'Child of earth, what wouldst thou have to make thee adore me?' I reflected long, for a gnawing ambition had long preyed upon me, and then I replied, 'Listen: I have always heard of Providence, and yet I have never seen him, nor anything that resembles him, or which can make me believe that he exists. I wish to be Providence myself, for I feel that the most beautiful, noblest, most sublime thing in the world, is to recompense and punish.' Satan bowed his head and groaned. 'You mistake,' he said; 'Providence does exist, only you have never seen him, because the child of God is as invisible as the parent. You have seen nothing that resembles him, because he works by secret springs, and moves by hidden ways. All I can do for you is to make you one of the agents of that Providence.' The bargain was concluded. I may have lost my soul; but what matters it?" added Monte Cristo. "If the thing were to do again, I would again do it."

Villefort looked at Monte Cristo with extreme amazement. "Monsieur the Count," he inquired, "have you any relatives?"

"No, sir, I am alone in the world."

"So much the worse."

"Why?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Because then you might witness a spectacle calculated to break down your pride. You say you fear nothing but death?"

"I did not say that I feared it; I only said that that alone could check me."

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"And old age?"

"My end will be achieved before I grow old."

"And madness?"

"I have been nearly mad; and you know the axiom, *non bis in idem.* It is an axiom of criminal law, and consequently you understand its full application."

"Monsieur," continued Villefort, "there is something to fear besides death, old age, and madness. For instance, there is apoplexy, — that lightning-stroke which strikes but does not destroy you, and yet after which all is ended. You are still yourself as now, and yet you are yourself no longer; you who like Ariel touch on the angelic, are but an inert mass, which like Caliban touches on the brutal; and this is called in human tongues, as I tell you, neither more nor less than apoplexy. Come, if so you will, Monsieur the Count, and continue this conversation at my house, any day you may be willing to see an adversary capable of understanding and anxious to refute you, and I will show you my father, M. Noirtier de Villefort, one of the most fiery Jacobins of the French Revolution, — that is to say, a man of the most remarkable audacity, seconded by a most vigorous temperament; a man who perhaps has not, like yourself, seen all the kingdoms of the earth, but who has helped to overturn one of the most powerful; a man who, like you, believed himself one of the envoys, not of God, but of the Supreme Being, — not of Providence, but of fate. Well, Monsieur, the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lobe of the brain has destroyed all this, — not in a day, not in an hour, but in a second. M. Noirtier, who on the previous night was the old Jacobin, the old senator, the old Carbonaro, laughing at the guillotine, laughing at the cannon, laughing at the dagger; M. Noirtier, playing with revolutions; M. Noirtier, for whom France was a vast chess-board from which

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pawns, rooks, knights, and queens were to disappear, so that the king was checkmated, — M. Noirtier, so redoubtable, was the next morning *poor M. Noirtier*, the helpless old man, at the tender mercies of the weakest creature in the household, that is, his grandchild, Valentine; a dumb and frozen carcass in fact, who only lives without suffering, that time may be given to his frame to decompose without his consciousness of its decay."

"Alas, sir!" said Monte Cristo, "this spectacle is neither strange to my eye nor my thought. I am something of a physician, and have, like my fellows, sought more than once for the soul in living and in dead matter; yet like Providence it has remained invisible to my eyes, although present to my heart. A hundred writers since Socrates, Seneca, Saint Augustine, and Gall have made in verse and prose the comparison you have made; and yet I can well understand that a father's sufferings may effect great changes in the mind of a son. I will call on you, sir, since you bid me contemplate, for the advantage of my pride, this terrible spectacle, which must spread so much sorrow throughout your house."

"It would have done so unquestionably, had not God given me so large a compensation. In presence of the old man who is dragging his way to the tomb, are two children just entering into life, — Valentine, the daughter by my first wife, Mademoiselle Renée de Saint-Méran, and Édouard, the boy whose life you have this day saved."

"And what is your deduction from this compensation, Monsieur?" inquired Monte Cristo.

"My deduction is," replied Villefort, "that my father, led away by his passions, has committed some fault unknown to human justice, but marked by the justice of God; and that God, wishing to punish but one person, has visited this justice on him alone."

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Monte Cristo, with a smile on his lips, had yet a groan at his heart, which would have made Villefort fly had he but heard it.

"Adieu, Monsieur," said the magistrate, who had risen from his seat; "I leave you, bearing a remembrance of you, — a remembrance of esteem, which I hope will not be disagreeable to you when you know me better; for I am not a man to bore my friends, as you will learn. Besides, you have made an eternal friend of Madame de Villefort."

The count bowed and contented himself with seeing Villefort to the door of his cabinet, the *procureur* being escorted to his carriage by two footmen, who on a signal from their master followed him with every mark of attention. When he had gone, Monte Cristo drew a hard breath from his oppressed bosom, and said, "Enough of this poison; let me now seek the antidote." Then sounding his bell, he said to Ali, who entered, "I am going to Madame's apartments; have the carriage ready at one o'clock."

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CHAPTER XIX.

HAYDÉE.

THE reader will remember who were the new — or rather, old — acquaintances of the Count of Monte Cristo who lived in the Rue Meslay; they were Maximilian, Julie, and Emmanuel. The anticipation of that pleasant visit which he was about to make, of those few happy moments he was to enjoy, of that ray of Paradise gleaming across the hell to which he had voluntarily committed himself, had, from the moment in which he had lost sight of Villefort, illumined the face of the count with a most charming expression of happiness; and Ali, who had responded quickly to the call of the bell, seeing that face so beaming with a joy so rare, withdrew on tiptoe and holding his breath, as if he feared to frighten away the pleasing thoughts which seemed to him to hover around his master.

It was the hour of noon, and Monte Cristo had set apart one hour to be passed with Haydée. It seemed as if happiness could not gain a sudden admission to that soul which had been so long oppressed; that it needed to prepare itself for gentle emotions, as other souls need to be prepared for violent emotions. The young Greek, as we have already stated, occupied apartments wholly unconnected with those of the count. The rooms had been fitted up in strict accordance with the Eastern style, — that is to say, the floors were covered with the richest carpets Turkey could produce, and the walls hung with brocaded silk of the most magnificent designs and texture; while

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around each chamber luxurious divans were placed, with piles of soft and yielding cushions that could be arranged at the pleasure of those who used them. Haydée had four women in her service, — three French and one Greek. The three French women remained constantly in a small waiting-room, ready to obey the first sound of a small golden bell, or to receive the orders of the Romaic slave, who knew sufficient French to transmit her mistress's orders to the three other waiting-women, who had received instructions from Monte Cristo to treat Haydée with all the respect and deference they would pay to a queen.

The young girl was in the inner room of her apartments, — a sort of boudoir, circular, lighted only from above, through panes of rose-colored glass. She was reclining upon cushions covered with blue satin spotted with silver; her head, supported by one of her exquisitely moulded arms, rested on the divan immediately behind her, while the other was employed in adjusting to her lips the coral tube of a rich nargile, through whose flexible pipe the vapor ascended fully impregnated with the rich odors of the most delicious flowers. Her attitude, though quite natural for an Oriental, would have evinced perhaps, in the case of a French woman, a slight affectation of coquetry. Her dress, which was that of the women of Epirus, consisted of a pair of white satin trousers, embroidered with pink roses, — exposing to view two small feet, which might have been taken for Parian marble but for their playing with two little sandals turned up at the point, and adorned with gold and pearls; a blue and white striped vest, with large open sleeves, trimmed with silver loops and buttons of pearls; and a species of bodice, which, of a heart-shaped pattern in front, exhibited the whole of the ivory throat and upper part of the bosom, and was fas-

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tened below by three diamond buttons. The junction of the bodice and trousers was entirely concealed by one of those many-colored scarfs, whose brilliant hues and rich silken fringe have rendered them so precious in the eyes of Parisian belles. A small cap of gold, embroidered with pearls, was placed on one side of her head; while on the other a natural rose, of purple color, mingled with the luxuriant masses of her hair, which was so black that it appeared to be blue. The beauty of the countenance was peculiarly and purely Grecian; there were the large dark melting eyes, straight nose, the coral lips, and pearly teeth, that belonged to her race and country. And to complete the whole, Haydée was in the very springtide and fulness of youthful charms; she was nineteen or twenty years old.

Monte Cristo summoned the Greek attendant, and bade her inquire whether it would be agreeable to her mistress to receive his visit. Haydée's only reply was to direct her servant by a sign to withdraw the tapestried curtain that hung before the door of her boudoir; the framework of the opening thus made served as a sort of border to the graceful tableau presented by the reclining young girl. As Monte Cristo approached, she leaned upon the elbow of the arm that held the nargile, and extending to him her other hand, said with a smile of captivating sweetness, in the sonorous language spoken by the women of Athens and Sparta, "Why demand permission ere you enter? Are you no longer my master, or have I ceased to be your slave?"

Monte Cristo returned her smile. "Haydée," said he, "you know —"

"Why do you address me so coldly?" asked the fair Greek. "Have I by any means displeased you? If so, punish me as you will; but do not speak to me so formally!"

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"Haydée," replied the count, "you know that we are now in France, and that you are consequently free!"

"Free!" repeated the young girl; "free to do what?"

"Free to leave me."

"Leave you! and why should I leave you?"

"That is not for me to say; but we are now about to mix in society, — to see the world."

"I have no wish to see any one."

"Nay, but hear me, Haydée. You cannot remain in seclusion in the midst of this gay capital; and should you see one whom you could prefer, think not I would be so selfish or unjust as to —"

"I have never seen men handsomer than you; and I have loved only you and my father."

"My poor child!" replied Monte Cristo, "that is merely because you have hardly spoken to any one but your father and myself."

"Well! what occasion is there for me to speak to any one else? My father called me *his joy;* you style me *your love;* and both of you call me *your child!*"

"Do you remember your father, Haydée?"

The young Greek smiled. "He is here, and here," said she, touching her eyes and her heart.

"And where am I then?" inquired Monte Cristo, laughingly.

"You?" cried she, "you are everywhere!"

Monte Cristo took the delicate hand of the young girl in his, and was about to raise it to his lips, when the simple child of Nature hastily withdrew it, and presented her fair cheek instead. "You now understand, Haydée," said the count, "that from this moment you are absolutely free; that you are mistress; that you are queen. You are at liberty to lay aside or continue the costume of your country, as it may suit your inclination; you will remain here when you

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wish, and you will go abroad when you wish. There will always be a carriage awaiting your orders; and Ali and Myrto will accompany you whithersoever you desire to go. There is but one favor I would entreat of you."

"Oh, speak!"

"Preserve most carefully the secret of your birth. Make no allusion to the past; nor upon any occasion be induced to pronounce the name of your illustrious father nor that of your poor mother!"

"I have already told you, my Lord, that I will see no one."

"It is possible, Haydée, that so perfect a seclusion, though conformable with the habits and customs of the East, may not be practicable in Paris. Endeavor, then, to accustom yourself to our manner of living in these northern climes, as you did to those of Rome, Florence, Milan, and Madrid; it may be useful to you one of these days, whether you remain here or return to the East."

The young girl raised her tearful eyes towards Monte Cristo, as she said with touching earnestness, "Whether *we* return to the East, you mean, do you not, my Lord?"

"My child," returned Monte Cristo, "you know well that if we part, it will be by no wish of mine. The tree does not leave the flower; the flower leaves the tree."

"My Lord," replied Haydée, "I will never leave you, for I am sure that I could not live without you."

"Poor child! In ten years I shall be old; and you will still be young."

"My father had numbered sixty years, and the snows of age were on his head, but I admired and loved him far better than all the gay, handsome youths I saw about his court."

"Then tell me, Haydée, do you believe you shall be able to accustom yourself to our present mode of life?"

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"Shall I see you?"

"Every day."

"Well, then! what are you asking me, my Lord?"

"I fear that you may feel lonely."

"No, my Lord, for in the morning I shall expect your coming, and in the evening shall remember that you have been with me; and besides, when alone I have grand remembrances, — I see again immense plains and far horizons with Pindus and Olympus in the distance; and then I have in my heart three sentiments which leave no room for *ennui*, — they are sorrow, love, and gratitude."

"You are a worthy daughter of Epirus, Haydée, and your charming and poetical ideas prove well your descent from that race of goddesses who claim your country as their birthplace; depend on my care to see that your youth is not blighted, or suffered to pass away in ungenial solitude, for if you love me as a father, I too love you as my child."

"Let not my Lord be deceived; the love I bear you resembles in no degree my feelings towards my father. I survived *his* death; but were any evil to befall you, the moment in which I learned the fatal tidings would be the last of my life."

The count, with a look of indescribable tenderness, extended his hand to the animated speaker, who carried it reverentially and affectionately to her lips. Monte Cristo, thus soothed and calmed into a befitting state of mind to pay his visit to the Morrels, departed, murmuring as he went these lines of Pindar, "Youth is a flower of which love is the fruit; happy is he who, after having watched its silent growth, is permitted to call it his own." The carriage was ready according to orders; and stepping lightly into it, the count drove off at his usual rapid pace.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE MORREL FAMILY.

In a very few minutes the count reached No. 7 in the Rue Meslay. The house was of white stone, and in a small court before it were two small beds full of beautiful flowers. In the *concierge* that opened the gate the count recognized Coclès; but as he had but one eye, and that eye had considerably weakened in the course of nine years, Coclès did not recognize the count. The carriages that drove up to the door were compelled to turn to avoid a fountain that played in a basin of rockwork, in which sported a large number of gold and silver fishes, — an ornament that had excited the jealousy of the whole quarter, and had gained for the house the appellation of *le Petit Versailles*. The house, raised above the kitchens and cellars, had besides the ground-floor two stories and attics. The whole of the property, consisting of an immense workshop, two pavilions at the bottom of the garden, and the garden itself, had been purchased by Emmanuel, who had seen at a glance that he could make a profitable speculation of it. He had reserved the house and half the garden, and building a wall between the garden and the workshops, had let them with the pavilions at the bottom of the garden; so that for a trifling sum he was as well lodged, and as completely shut out from observation as the most exacting proprietor of a hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain. The dining-room was of oak; the salon, of mahogany and blue velvet; the bedroom, of citron wood

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and green damask. There was a study for Emmanuel, who never studied, and a music-room for Julie, who never played. The whole of the second story was set apart for Maximilian; it was precisely the same as his sister's apartments, except that the dining-room was changed into a billiard-room, where he received his friends. He was superintending the grooming of his horse, and smoking his cigar at the entrance of the garden, when the count's carriage stopped at the door.

Coclès opened the gate, and Baptistin, springing from the box, inquired whether Monsieur and Madame Herbaut and M. Maximilian Morrel would see M. le Comte de Monte Cristo.

"M. le Comte de Monte Cristo?" cried Morrel, throwing away his cigar and hastening to the carriage; "I should think we would see him! Ah! a thousand thanks, Monsieur the Count, for not having forgotten your promise." And the young officer shook the count's hand so warmly that the latter could not be mistaken as to the sincerity of his expressions; he saw that he had been expected with impatience, and was received with pleasure.

"Come, come!" said Maximilian; "I will serve as your guide, — such a man as you are ought not to be introduced by a servant. My sister is in the garden plucking the dead roses; my brother is reading his two papers, 'La Presse' and 'Les Débats,' within five steps of her; for wherever you see Madame Herbaut you have only to look within a circle of four yards and you will find M. Emmanuel, and 'reciprocally,' as they say at the École Polytechnique." At the sound of their steps a young woman of from twenty to twenty-five years, dressed in a silk *robe de chambre*, and busily engaged in plucking the dead leaves off the splendid rose-tree, raised her head. This woman was Julie, who had become, as the clerk of the

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house of Thomson and French had predicted, Madame Emmanuel Herbaut. She uttered a cry of surprise at the sight of a stranger; and Maximilian began to laugh. "Don't disturb yourself, Julie," said he. "Monsieur the Count has only been two or three days in Paris; but he already knows what a woman of fashion of the Marais is, and if he does not you will show him."

"Ah, Monsieur!" returned Julie, "it is treason in my brother to bring you thus; but he never has any regard for his poor sister. Penelon! Penelon!"

An old man, who was digging busily at one of the beds of roses, stuck his spade in the earth and approached, cap in hand, and striving to conceal a quid of tobacco he had just thrust into his cheek. A few locks of gray mingled with his hair, which was still thick and matted, while his bronzed features and determined glance announced the old sailor who had braved the heat of the equator and the storms of the tropics. "I think you hailed me, Mademoiselle Julie?" said he. Penelon had still preserved the habit of calling his master's daughter "Mademoiselle Julie," and had never been able to change the name to Madame Herbaut.

"Penelon," replied Julie, "go and inform M. Emmanuel of this gentleman's visit, while Maximilian conducts him to the salon." Then, turning to Monte Cristo, "I hope you will permit me to leave you for a few minutes," continued she, and without awaiting any reply disappeared behind a clump of trees, and entered the house by a lateral alley.

"I am sorry to see," observed Monte Cristo to Morrel, "that I cause no small disturbance in your house."

"Look there," said Maximilian, laughing; "there is her husband changing his jacket for a coat. I assure you that you are well known in the Rue Meslay."

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"Your family appears to me a very happy one!" said the count, as if speaking to himself.

"Oh, yes, I assure you, Monsieur the Count, they want nothing that can render them happy. They are young and cheerful; they are tenderly attached to each other; and with twenty-five thousand livres a year they fancy themselves as rich as the Rothschilds."

"Five and twenty thousand livres is not a large sum, however," replied Monte Cristo, with a tone so sweet and gentle that it went to Maximilian's heart like the voice of a father; "but they will not be content with that. Your brother-in-law is a barrister; a doctor?"

"He was a merchant, Monsieur the Count, and had succeeded to the business of my poor father. M. Morrel, at his death, left five hundred thousand livres, which were divided between my sister and myself, for we were his only children. Her husband, who when he married her had no other patrimony than his noble probity, his first-rate ability, and his spotless reputation, wished to possess as much as his wife. He labored and toiled until he had amassed two hundred and fifty thousand livres; six years sufficed to achieve this object. Oh, I assure you, Monsieur the Count, it was a touching spectacle to see these young creatures, destined by their talents for higher stations, toiling together, and unwilling to change any of the customs of their paternal house, taking six years to accomplish that which innovators would have effected in two or three. Marseilles still resounds with their well-earned praises. At last, one day Emmanuel came to his wife, who had just finished making up the accounts. 'Julie,' said he to her, 'Coclès has just given me the last *rouleau* of a hundred livres; that completes the two hundred and fifty thousand livres we had fixed as the limits of our gains. Can you content yourself with the small fortune which we shall

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possess for the future? Listen to me. Our house transacts business to the amount of a million a year, from which we derive an income of forty thousand livres. We can dispose of the business, if we please, in an hour, for I have received a letter from M. Delaunay, in which he offers to purchase the good-will of the house, to unite it with his own, for three hundred thousand livres. Advise me what I had better do.' 'Emmanuel,' returned my sister, 'the house of Morrel can only be carried on by a Morrel. Is it not worth three hundred thousand livres to save our father's name from the chances of evil fortune and failure?' 'I thought so,' replied Emmanuel; 'but I wished to have your advice.' 'This is my counsel: Our accounts are made up and our bills paid; all we have to do is to stop the issue of any more, and close our office.' This was done instantly. It was three o'clock; at a quarter past a merchant presented himself to insure two ships. There was a clear profit of fifteen thousand livres. 'Monsieur,' said Emmanuel, 'have the goodness to address yourself to M. Delaunay. We have quitted business.' 'How long ago?' inquired the astonished merchant. 'A quarter of an hour,' was the reply. And this is the reason, Monsieur," continued Maximilian, "that my sister and brother-in-law have only twenty-five thousand livres a year."

Maximilian had scarcely finished his story, during which the count's heart had seemed ready to burst, when Emmanuel entered, having meanwhile put on a hat and coat. He saluted the count with the air of a man who is aware of the rank of his guest, then after having led Monte Cristo round the little garden, he returned to the house. A large vase of Japan porcelain, filled with flowers that impregnated the air with their perfume, stood in the salon. Julie, suitably dressed, and with her hair coquettishly arranged (she had accomplished

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this feat in less than ten minutes), received the count on his entrance. The songs of the birds were heard in an aviary hard by, — the branches of false ebony trees and rose acacias forming the border of the blue velvet curtains. Everything in this charming retreat, from the warble of the birds to the smile of the mistress, breathed tranquillity and repose. The count had felt from the moment he entered the house the influence of this happiness, and he remained silent and pensive, forgetting that he was expected to recommence the conversation which had ceased after the first salutations had been exchanged. He perceived the pause, and by a violent effort tearing himself from his revery, "Madame," said he at length, "I pray you to excuse my emotion, which must astonish you who are accustomed to the happiness I meet here; but satisfaction upon a human countenance is so new a sight to me, that I could never be weary of looking at yourself and your husband."

"We are indeed very happy, Monsieur," replied Julie; "but we have also known unhappiness, and few have ever undergone more bitter sufferings than ourselves."

The count's features now displayed an expression of curiosity.

"Oh, all this is a family history, as Château-Renaud told you the other day," observed Maximilian. "This humble picture would have but little interest for you, accustomed as you are to behold the pleasures and the misfortunes of the wealthy and illustrious; but such as we are we have experienced bitter sorrows."

"And God has poured balm into your wounds, as he does for all those who are in affliction?" said Monte Cristo, inquiringly.

"Yes, Monsieur the Count," returned Julie, "we may indeed say he has, for he has done for us what

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he does for only his elect, — he sent us one of his angels."

The count's cheeks became scarlet, and he coughed so as to have an excuse for putting his handkerchief to his mouth.

"Those born to wealth and who have the means of gratifying every wish," said Emmanuel, "know not what is the real happiness of life; just as those who have been tossed on the stormy waters of the ocean on a few frail planks can alone estimate the value of a clear and serene sky."

Monte Cristo rose, and without making any answer, — for the tremulousness of his voice would have betrayed his emotion, — walked up and down the room with a slow step.

"Our magnificence makes you smile, Monsieur the Count," said Maximilian, who had followed him with his eyes.

"No, no," returned Monte Cristo, very pale, and pressing one hand on his heart to still its throbbings, while with the other he pointed to a crystal cover, beneath which a silken purse lay on a black velvet cushion. "I was wondering what could be the use of this purse which appears to contain a paper at one end, and at the other a large diamond."

"Monsieur the Count," replied Maximilian, with an air of gravity, "those are our most precious family treasures."

"The stone seems very brilliant," answered the count.

"Oh, my brother does not allude to its value, although it has been estimated at one hundred thousand livres; he means that the articles contained in this purse are memorials of the angel of whom I spoke just now."

"This I do not comprehend; and yet I may not ask for an explanation, Madame," replied Monte Cristo, bowing. "Pardon me, I had no intention of committing an indiscretion."

"Indiscretion! Oh, you make us happy by giving us

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an occasion of expatiating on this subject. Did we intend to conceal the noble action this purse commemorates, we should not expose it thus. Oh! would we could relate it everywhere and to every one! so that the emotion of our unknown benefactor might reveal his presence."

"Ah, really!" said Monto Cristo, in a half-stifled voice.

"Monsieur," returned Maximilian, raising the glass cover and respectfully kissing the silken purse, "this has touched the hand of a man who saved my father from suicide, us from ruin, and our name from shame and disgrace, — a man by whose matchless benevolence we, poor children doomed to want and wretchedness, can at present hear every one envying our happy lot. This letter" (as he spoke, Maximilian drew a letter from the purse and gave it to the count) — "this letter was written by him the day that my father had taken a desperate resolution, and this diamond was given by the generous unknown to my sister as her dowry." Monte Cristo opened the letter and read it with an indescribable feeling of delight. It was the letter written (as our readers know) to Julie, and signed "Sinbad the Sailor."

"Unknown, you say; is the man who rendered you this service unknown to you?"

"Yes; we have never had the happiness of pressing his hand," continued Maximilian. "We have supplicated Heaven in vain to grant us this favor, but all the affair has had a mysterious direction which we cannot comprehend; all has been guided by a hand invisible but powerful as that of an enchanter."

"Oh!" cried Julie, "I have not lost all hope of some day kissing that hand as I now kiss the purse which he has touched. Four years ago Penelon was at Trieste, — Penelon, Monsieur the Count, is the old sailor whom you saw in the garden, and who from quartermaster has be-

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come gardener, — Penelon, when he was at Trieste, saw on the quay an Englishman who was on the point of embarking on board a yacht; and he recognized him as the person who called on my father on the 5th of June, 1829, and who wrote me this letter on the 5th of September. He felt convinced of his identity, but he did not venture to address him."

"An Englishman!" said Monte Cristo, who grew uneasy at the attention with which Julie looked at him. "An Englishman, you say?"

"Yes," replied Maximilian, "an Englishman, who represented himself as the confidential clerk of the house of Thomson and French, at Rome. It was this that made me start when you said the other day, at M. de Morcerf's, that Messrs. Thomson and French were your bankers. That happened, as I told you, in 1829. For God's sake, tell me, did you know this Englishman?"

"But you tell me, also, that the house of Thomson and French have constantly denied having rendered you this service?"

"Yes."

"Then is it not probable that this Englishman may be some one who, grateful for a kindness your father had shown him, and which he himself had forgotten, has taken this method of requiting the obligation?"

"Everything is possible on such an occasion, even a miracle."

"What was his name?" asked Monte Cristo.

"He gave no other name," answered Julie, looking earnestly at the count, "than that at the end of his letter, — 'Sinbad the Sailor.'"

"Which is evidently not his real name, but a fictitious one."

Then noticing that Julie was struck with the sound of

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his voice, "Tell me," continued he, "was he not about my height, perhaps a little taller and slenderer, with his neck confined in a high cravat, — closely buttoned and laced, and always carrying a pencil in his hand?"

"Oh, do you then know him?" cried Julie, whose eyes sparkled with joy.

"No," returned Monte Cristo, "I only guessed. I knew a Lord Wilmore, who was constantly doing acts of generosity."

"Without revealing himself?"

"He was an eccentric being, and did not believe in the existence of gratitude."

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Julie, clasping her hands. "In what did he believe, then?"

"He did not believe in it at the period when I knew him," said Monte Cristo, touched to the heart by the accents of Julie's voice; "but perhaps since then he has had proofs that gratitude does exist."

"And do you know this gentleman, Monsieur?" inquired Emmanuel.

"Oh, if you do know him," cried Julie, "can you tell us where he is, — where we can find him? Maximilian, Emmanuel! if we do but discover him, he must believe in the gratitude of the heart!"

Monte Cristo felt tears start into his eyes, and he again walked hastily up and down the room.

"In the name of Heaven!" said Maximilian, "if you know anything of him, tell us what it is."

"Alas!" cried Monte Cristo, striving to repress his emotion. "If Lord Wilmore was your unknown benefactor, I fear you will never again see him. I parted from him two years ago at Palermo, and he was then on the point of setting out for the most remote regions; so that I fear he will never return."

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"Oh, Monsieur, this is cruel of you," said Julie, much affected; and tears came into her eyes.

"Madame," replied Monte Cristo, gravely, and gazing earnestly on the two liquid pearls that trickled down Julie's cheeks, "had Lord Wilmore seen what I now see, he would become attached to life, for the tears you shed would reconcile him to mankind;" and he held out his hand to Julie, who gave him hers, carried away by the look and accent of the count.

"But this Lord Wilmore," said she, clinging to the last hope, "had a country, a family, relatives,—in short, he was known to some one? Could we not, then—"

"Oh, make no inquiries, Madame," said the count; "do not build chimerical hopes on that word of mine. No; Lord Wilmore is probably not the man whom you seek. He was my friend; he had no secrets from me, and he would have confided this also to me."

"And he told you nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Never a word which might lead you to suppose—"

"Never."

"And yet you instantly named him."

"Ah, in such a case one supposes—"

"Sister, Sister," said Maximilian, coming to the count's aid, "Monsieur is quite right. Recollect what our excellent father so often told us: 'It was no Englishman that thus saved us.'"

Monte Cristo started. "What did your father tell you, M. Morrel?" said he, eagerly.

"My father thought that this action had been miraculously performed; he believed that a benefactor had arisen from the grave to save us. Oh, it was a touching superstition, Monsieur; and although I did not myself believe it, I would not for the world have destroyed my father's

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faith in it. How often did he muse over it and pronounce the name of a dear friend, — a friend lost to him forever! and on his death-bed, when the near approach of eternity seemed to have illumined his mind with supernatural light, this thought, which had until then been but a doubt, became a conviction, and his last words were, 'Maximilian, it was Edmond Dantès!'"

At these words the count's paleness, which had for some time been increasing, became alarming. He could not speak; he looked at his watch like a man who has forgotten the time, said a few hurried words to Madame Herbaut, and pressing the hands of Emmanuel and Maximilian, "Madame," said he, "I trust you will allow me to visit you from time to time; I value your friendship and feel grateful to you for your welcome, for this is the first time for many years that I have thus yielded to my feelings;" and he hastily quitted the room.

"This Count of Monte Cristo is a singular man," said Emmanuel.

"Yes," answered Maximilian, "but I feel sure he has an excellent heart, and that he likes us."

"His voice went to my heart," observed Julie; "and two or three times I fancied I had heard it before."

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CHAPTER XXI.

PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

NEAR the middle of the Faubourg St. Honoré, and at the back of one of the most distinguished-looking mansions in this rich neighborhood, where the various hotels vie with each other for elegance of design and magnificence of construction, extended a large garden, whose widely-spreading chestnut-trees raised their heads above the walls, high and solid as those of a rampart, scattering each spring a shower of delicate pink and white blossoms into the large stone vases placed at equal distances upon the two square pilasters supporting an iron gate of the time of Louis XIV. This noble entrance, however, notwithstanding its striking appearance and the graceful effect of the geraniums planted in the two vases, as they waved their variegated leaves in the wind, and charmed the eye with their scarlet bloom, had fallen into utter disuse from the period when the proprietors of the hotel (and many years had elapsed since then) had confined themselves to the possession of the hotel, with its thickly-planted courtyard opening into the Faubourg St. Honoré, and the garden shut in by this gate, which formerly communicated with a fine kitchen-garden of about an acre in extent. But the demon of speculation having drawn a line, — that is to say, a street, — at the extremity of this garden, and the street having received a name even before it was completed, it occurred to the owner to sell the garden for a building

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site on the street, and make connection with that grand artery of Paris called the Faubourg St. Honoré.

In matters of speculation, however, man proposes, and money disposes. The newly named street was never finished; and the purchaser of the kitchen-garden, having made complete payment, was unable to find any one willing to take his bargain off his hands without a considerable loss. Believing, however, that at some future day he should obtain a sum for it that would repay him not only for his past outlay, but also the interest upon the capital locked up in his new acquisition, he contented himself with letting the ground temporarily to some market-gardeners, at a yearly rent of five hundred livres. Thus, then, as already stated, the iron gate leading into the kitchen-garden had been closed up and left to the rust, which bade fair to destroy its hinges ere long, while to prevent the ignoble glances of the diggers and delvers of the ground from presuming to sully the aristocratic enclosure belonging to the hotel, the gate in question had been boarded up to a height of six feet. True, the planks are not so closely adjusted but that stolen views may be obtained between their interstices; but that house is rigidly proper, and has no fear of indiscreet curiosity.

In that garden, where the most choice and delicate of fruits and vegetables once reared their heads, a scanty crop of lucerne alone bears evidence of cultivation. A small, low door opening on the projected street gives entrance to the enclosed space, which has finally been abandoned on account of its sterility, and which for a week past instead of yielding one half of one per cent on its cost, as it had previously, yields nothing at all. Towards the hotel the chestnut-trees we have before mentioned rise high above the wall, without in any way affecting the growth of other luxuriant shrubs and flowers that eagerly press forward to

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fill up the vacant spaces, as though asserting their right to enjoy the boon of light and air also. At one corner, where the foliage is so thick as almost to shut out the daylight, a large stone bench and sundry rustic seats indicate that this sheltered spot is either a place of assemblage or a favorite retreat of some inhabitant of the hotel, which is faintly discernible through the dense mass of verdure that partially conceals it, though situated but a hundred paces off. In short, the choice of this mysterious retreat is abundantly justified by the absence of all glare; the cool, refreshing shade; the screen it affords from the scorching rays of the sun, that find no entrance there even during the burning days of hottest summer; the warbling of birds; and the seclusion from both the noise of the street and the bustle of the hotel.

On the evening of one of the warmest days spring had yet bestowed on the inhabitants of Paris, might be seen, negligently thrown upon the stone bench, a book, a parasol, and a work-basket from which hung a partly embroidered cambric handkerchief; while at a little distance from these articles was a young woman, standing close to the iron gate, endeavoring to discern something on the other side through the openings in the planks, while the earnestness of her attitude and the fixed gaze with which she seemed to seek the object of her wishes, proved how much her feelings were interested in the matter. At that instant, the little side door leading from the enclosure to the street was noiselessly opened; and a tall powerful young man, dressed in a common gray blouse and velvet cap, but whose carefully arranged hair, beard, and mustaches, all of the richest and glossiest black, but ill accorded with his plebeian attire, after casting a rapid glance around him, in order to assure himself that he was unobserved, entered, and carefully closing and securing it after

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him, proceeded with a hurried step towards the iron gate.

On seeing him present whom she had been expecting to see, though probably not in such a costume, the young girl started in terror, and was about to make a hasty retreat. But the young man with the eye of love had already seen through the openings in the gate the movement of the white robe, and observed the fluttering of the blue sash fastened around the slender waist of his fair neighbor. He sprang to the wall, and applying his mouth to an opening, exclaimed, "Fear nothing, Valentine; it is I!"

The young girl drew near. "Oh, Monsieur," she said, "why have you come to-day so late? It is almost the dinner-hour, and I have been compelled to exercise my utmost skill to get rid of the incessant watchfulness of my stepmother, as well as the espionage of my maid, who no doubt is employed to report all I do and say. Nor has it cost me a little trouble to free myself from the troublesome society of my brother, under pretence of coming hither to work undisturbed at my embroidery, which I fear will not soon be finished. So excuse yourself as well as you can for having made me wait; and after that tell me why I see you in so singular a dress, which almost prevented my recognizing you."

"Dear Valentine," said the young man, "you are so far beyond my love that I dare not speak of it to you; and yet every time I see you I want to tell you that I adore you, so that the echo of my own words is sweet in my heart when I am no longer with you. Now I thank you for your reproaches; they are altogether charming, for they show me, I don't dare to say that you awaited me, but that you thought of me. You wish to know the cause of my delay and the reason of my disguise; I will explain, and I hope that you will pardon. I have chosen a trade."

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"A trade! Oh, Maximilian, how can you jest at a time when we have such deep cause for uneasiness?"

"Heaven keep me from jesting with that which is far dearer to me than life itself! But listen to me, Valentine, and I will tell you all about it. Tired out with ranging fields and scaling walls, and seriously alarmed at the idea suggested by yourself, that if I should be caught hovering about here your father would very likely have me sent to prison as a thief, — which would taint the honor of the entire French army, — and dreading no less the surprise that might be occasioned by the sight of a captain of Spahis hovering eternally about this spot where there is neither a citadel to besiege nor a stockade to defend, — I have become a gardener, and have adopted the costume of my calling."

"What nonsense you talk, Maximilian!"

"On the contrary, it is, I believe, the wisest action of my life, for it affords us every security."

"I beseech of you, Maximilian, to tell me what you mean."

"Simply, that having ascertained that the piece of ground on which I stand was to let, I made application for it, was readily accepted by the proprietor, and am now master of this fine crop of lucerne! Think of that, Valentine! There is nothing now to prevent my building myself a little hut on my plantation, and residing not twenty yards from you. Imagine my happiness! I can scarcely contain myself. Do you understand, Valentine, that such things can be paid for? Impossible, is it not? Well, all that happiness, all that comfort, all that joy, for which I would have given ten years of my life, cost me — guess how much? — five hundred livres per year, payable quarterly! Henceforth we have nothing to fear. I am on my own ground, and have an undoubted right to place a

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ladder against the wall, and to look over when I please; and I may tell you that I love you, without fear of being taken off by the police, — unless, indeed, it offends your pride to listen to professions of love from the lips of a poor working-man, clad in a blouse and cap."

A faint cry of mingled pleasure and surprise escaped from the lips of Valentine, who almost instantly said in a saddened tone, as though some envious cloud darkened the joy which illumined her heart, "Alas, no, Maximilian! this must not be, for many reasons! We should presume too much on our own strength, and like others perhaps be led astray by our blind confidence in each other's prudence."

"How can you for an instant entertain so unworthy a thought, dear Valentine? Have I not, from the first blessed hour of our acquaintance, schooled all my words and actions to your sentiments and ideas? And you have, I am sure, the fullest confidence in my honor. When you spoke to me of your experiencing a vague and indefinite sense of coming danger, I placed myself devotedly at your service, asking no other reward than the pleasure of being useful to you; and have I ever since by word or look given you cause of regret for having selected me from among those who would willingly have sacrificed their lives for you? You told me, my dear Valentine, that you were engaged to M. d'Épinay; and that your father was resolved upon completing the match; and that from his will there was no appeal, as M. de Villefort was never known to change a determination once formed. Well, I kept myself in the background, awaiting, not my own resolution nor yours, but the ordering of Providence. And meanwhile you love me; you have had pity on me and avowed it. I thank you for that sweet word; I ask only that you will repeat it from time to time, — it will enable me to forget everything else."

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"Ah, Maximilian, that is the very thing that makes you so bold, and which renders me at once so happy and unhappy that I frequently ask myself which is to be preferred, — the unhappiness occasioned by the harshness of my stepmother, and her blind preference for her own child, or the happiness full of danger which I enjoy in seeing you."

"Danger!" cried Maximilian; "can you use a word so hard and so unjust? Is it possible to find a more submissive slave than myself? You have permitted me to converse with you from time to time, Valentine, but forbidden my ever following you in your walks or elsewhere; I have obeyed. And since I found means to enter this enclosure, to talk with you through this door, to be close to you without seeing you, have I ever sought to touch even the hem of your robe through these openings? Have I ever attempted to throw down this wall, — an obstacle so trivial to my youth and my strength? I have never complained of your reserve, never expressed a desire. I have held to my promise like a knight of the olden time. Come, admit so much at least, that I may not think you unjust."

"It is true," said Valentine, passing through a small opening in the planks the end of one of her delicate fingers, to which Maximilian pressed his lips, — "it is true. You are an honorable friend; but still you acted from motives of self-interest, my dear Maximilian, for you well knew that from the moment in which you had manifested an opposite spirit all would have been ended between us. You promised to bestow on me the friendly affection of a brother, — on me, who have no friend but yourself upon earth, who am neglected and forgotten by my father, harassed and persecuted by my stepmother, and left to the sole companionship of a paralyzed and speechless old man, whose

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withered hand can no longer press mine, whose eye alone converses with me, and whose heart doubtless retains for me some lingering warmth. Oh, how bitter a fate is mine, to serve either as a victim or an enemy to all who are stronger than myself, while my only friend and supporter is but a living corpse! Indeed, Maximilian, I am very miserable, and you are right to love me for my sake and not your own."

"Valentine," replied the young man, deeply affected, "I will not say you are all I love in the world, for I dearly prize my sister and brother-in-law; but my affection for them is calm and tranquil, in no manner resembling that I feel for you. At the mere thought of you my heart beats more quickly, my blood flows with increased rapidity through my veins, and my breast heaves with tumultuous emotions; but I solemnly promise you to restrain all this ardor, this fervor and intensity of feeling, until you yourself shall require me to render them available in serving or assisting you. M. Franz is not expected to return home for a year to come, I am told; in that time many favorable and unforeseen chances may befriend us. Let us, then, hope for the best, — hope is so sweet a comforter. Meanwhile, Valentine, while reproaching me with selfishness, think a little of what you have been to me, — the beautiful and cold statue of a modest Venus. In return for that devotion, that obedience, that restraint, what have you promised me, — you? Nothing. What have you granted me? Very little. You tell me of M. Franz d'Épinay, your betrothed lover; and you shrink from the idea of being his wife. Tell me, Valentine, is there nothing else in your heart? What! I pledge my life to you, I give you my soul, I devote to you even the lightest pulsation of my heart. And when I am thus wholly yours; when I say to myself that I shall die if I lose you, — you, you do not

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shudder with fright at the bare thought of belonging to another! Oh, Valentine, Valentine! if I were in your place, if I knew myself loved as you are sure that I love you, a hundred times at least should I have passed my hand between these iron bars, and said to poor Maximilian, 'Yours, yours only, Maximilian, in this world and the next!'"

Valentine made no reply; but her lover could plainly hear her sobs and tears. A rapid change took place in the young man's feelings. "Oh, Valentine, Valentine!" he exclaimed, "forget my words if there is anything in them to give you pain."

"No," she said, "you are right; but do you not see that I am a poor creature, at home abandoned almost as a stranger, — for my father is almost a stranger to me, — whose will, since I was ten years old, has been broken day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, by the iron will of those by whom I am oppressed? No one knows what I suffer, and I have not spoken of it except to you. Outwardly, and in the eyes of the world, all goes well with me, — every one is kind to me; but in fact every one is my enemy. The general remark is, 'Oh, it cannot be expected that one of so stern a character as M. de Villefort could lavish the tenderness some fathers do on their daughters, but she has had the happiness to find a second mother in Madame de Villefort.' The world, however, is mistaken; my father abandons me from utter indifference, while my stepmother detests me with a hatred the more terrible as it is veiled beneath a continual smile."

"Hate you! you, Valentine!" exclaimed the young man; "how is it possible for any one to do that?"

"Alas!" said Valentine, "I am obliged to own that my stepmother's aversion to me arises from a very natural source, — her overweening love for her own child, my brother Édouard."

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"How is that?"

"How is it? It seems strange to me to speak of money matters in a conversation with you; but, my friend, I think her hatred towards me springs from that source. She has no fortune; while I am already rich, as heiress to my mother, and my possessions will be doubled by the wealth of Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran, which will some day fall to me. Well, I think that she is envious. Oh, my God! if I could only give to her the half of that fortune and find myself in the home of M. de Villefort as a daughter in the house of her father, I would certainly do it without hesitation."

"Poor Valentine!"

"I seem to myself as though living a life of bondage, yet at the same time am so conscious of weakness that I fear to break the restraint in which I am held, lest I fall utterly powerless and helpless. Then, too, my father is not a person whose orders may be infringed with impunity. He is powerful against me; he would be powerful against you, even against the king, — protected as he is by an irreproachable past and by a position almost impregnable. Oh, Maximilian! I assure you if I do not struggle, it is because you also, as well as I, would be overwhelmed in that struggle."

"But why, Valentine, do you despair, and regard the future with dread?"

"Ah, my friend! because I judge it from the past."

"Still, consider that although I may not be, strictly speaking, what is termed an illustrious match for you, I am for many reasons not altogether so much beneath your alliance. The days when such distinctions were so nicely weighed and considered no longer exist in France; and the first families of the monarchy have intermarried with those of the empire. The aristocracy of the lance has

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allied itself with the nobility of the cannon. Well, I belong to the latter class; I have a promising future in the army; I possess a fortune limited but independent; and my father's memory is revered in our country as that of a most honorable merchant. I say our country, Valentine, because you were born not far from Marseilles."

"Name not Marseilles, I beseech you, Maximilian; that one word brings back my mother to my recollection, — my angel mother, who died too soon for myself and for all who knew her, but who, after watching over her child during a brief period in this world, now, I hope at least, contemplates her with pitying tenderness from those realms of bliss to which her pure spirit has flown. Ah, were she still living, we need fear nothing, Maximilian, for I would confide our love to her, and she would aid and protect us."

"I fear, Valentine," replied the lover, "that were she living I should never have had the happiness of knowing you. You would then have been too happy; and Valentine happy would have regarded me disdainfully from the height of her grandeur."

"It is you who are unkind, — ay, and unjust, too, now, Maximilian," cried Valentine; "but there is one thing I wish to know."

"And what is that," inquired the young man, perceiving that Valentine hesitated and seemed at a loss how to proceed.

"Tell me, Maximilian, whether in former days, at Marseilles, there ever existed any misunderstanding between your father and mine?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied the young man; "unless, indeed, some ill-feeling might have arisen from their being of opposite parties, — your father being, as you

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know, a zealous partisan of the Bourbons, while mine was wholly devoted to the emperor. There could not have been any other difference between them. But why that question, Valentine?"

"I will tell you," replied the young girl, "for it is but right that you should know all. Then I must begin by referring to the day when your being made an officer of the Legion of Honor was publicly announced in the papers. We were all sitting in the apartment of my grandfather, M. Noirtier. M. Danglars was there also; you recollect M. Danglars, do you not, Maximilian? — the banker, whose horses ran away with my stepmother and little brother, and very nearly killed them. While the rest of the company were discussing the approaching marriage of Mademoiselle Danglars, I was occupied in reading the paper aloud to my grandfather; but when I came to the paragraph concerning you, although I had done nothing else but read it over to myself all the morning (you know you had told me all about it the previous evening), I felt so happy, and yet so nervous, at the idea of pronouncing your beloved name aloud and before so many people, that I really think I should have passed it over but for the fear that my so doing might create suspicions as to the cause of my silence. So I summoned up all my courage, and read it as firmly and steadily as I could."

"Dear Valentine!"

"Well, as soon as my father caught the sound of your name he turned round quite hastily. I was so certain — you see how foolish I am — that every one had been struck by your name as by a thunderbolt that I thought I saw my father give a start, and even M. Danglars, too, — though that of course was an illusion.

"'Morrel! Morrel!' cried my father, 'stop a bit;' then, knitting his brows into a deep frown, he added, 'Can that

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be one of the Morrels of Marseilles, — those furious Bonapartists who gave us so much trouble in 1815?'

"'I fancy,' replied M. Danglars, 'that the individual alluded to in the journal Mademoiselle is reading is the son of that former ship-owner.'"

"Indeed!" answered Maximilian; "and what said your father then, Valentine?"

"Oh, such a dreadful thing I dare not repeat it."

"Tell it, nevertheless," said the young man, smiling.

"'Ah,' continued my father, still frowning, 'their idolized emperor treated these madmen as they deserved; he called them "food for cannon," which was precisely all they were good for. And I am delighted to see that the present Government is vigorously applying this salutary principle. Though it should keep Algiers only for that purpose, I would congratulate the Government, even though that policy be costly.'"

"The sentiments expressed were somewhat unfeeling," said Maximilian; "but do not blush, dear friend, at that speech of M. de Villefort, for I can assure you that my father was not behind yours in the heat of his political expressions. 'Why,' said he, 'does not the emperor, who does so many fine things, form a regiment of judges and lawyers and send them always to the front of battle?' You see, Valentine, that for mildness of thought and picturesqueness of expression there is not much choice between the two parties. But what said M. Danglars to this burst of party spirit on the part of the *procureur du roi?*"

"Oh, he laughed, and in that sinister way peculiar to him and which to me seems ferocious; and a moment later they got up and went out. Then for the first time I observed the agitation of my grandfather; and I must tell you Maximilian, that I am the only person capable of discerning

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emotion in that poor paralytic. I suspected that the conversation that had been carried on in his presence (for no one pays attention to him, poor man) had made a strong impression on his mind, — for naturally enough it must have pained him to hear the emperor he so devotedly loved and served spoken of in that depreciating manner."

"The name of M. Noirtier," said Maximilian, "is one of the celebrated names of the empire. He was a statesman of high standing; and I know not whether you are aware, Valentine, that he took a leading part in every Bonapartist conspiracy set on foot during the restoration of the Bourbons."

"Oh, I have often heard whispers of things that seem to me most strange, — the father a Bonapartist, the son a Royalist; what can have been the reason of so singular a difference in parties and politics? But to resume my story: I turned towards my grandfather, as though to question him as to the cause of his emotion; he looked expressively at the newspaper I had been reading. 'What is the matter, dear grandfather?' said I. 'Are you pleased?' He gave me a sign in the affirmative. 'With what my father said just now?' He returned a sign in the negative. 'Perhaps you liked what M. Danglars remarked?' Another sign in the negative. 'Oh, then, you were glad to hear that M. Morrel' (I dared not say Maximilian) 'has been made an officer of the Legion of Honor?' He signified assent. Only think of the poor old man's being pleased that you, a stranger to him, had been made an officer of the Legion of Honor! Perhaps, though, it was foolishness on his part, for he is falling, they say, into a second childhood! but I love him better for that sign of assent."

"How singular," murmured Maximilian, "that your father should apparently hate the very mention of my

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name, while your grandfather, on the contrary — Strange things are these partisan loves and hatreds!"

"Hush!" cried Valentine, suddenly, "conceal yourself! Go, go! Some one comes!"

Maximilian leaped at one bound into his crop of lucerne, which he commenced pulling up in the most pitiless manner, under the pretext of being occupied in weeding it.

"Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle!" exclaimed a voice from behind the trees. "Madame is searching for you everywhere; there are visitors in the drawing-room."

"Visitors!" inquired Valentine, much agitated, "who are they?"

"A great lord, a prince, as they tell me, — M. le Comte de Monte Cristo."

"I will come directly," said Valentine, aloud.

The name caused an electric shock to the individual on the other side of the iron gate, on whose ear the "I will come!" of Valentine sounded the parting knell of all their interviews.

"Now, then," said Maximilian, leaning thoughtfully on his spade, "how does it happen that the Count of Monte Cristo is acquainted with M. de Villefort?"

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CHAPTER XXII.

TOXICOLOGY.

It was really the Count of Monte Cristo who had just arrived at Madame de Villefort's for the purpose of returning the visit of the *procureur du roi;* and at this name, as may be easily imagined, the whole house was in confusion. Madame de Villefort, who was alone in her drawing-room when the count was announced, desired that her son might be brought thither instantly to renew his thanks to the count; and Édouard, who had heard this great personage spoken of unceasingly the last two days made all possible haste to come to him, — not in obedience to his mother, nor from any feeling of gratitude to the count, but from sheer curiosity, and that he might make some remark by help of which he might find an opportunity for saying one of those small pertnesses which made his mother say, "Oh, that sad child! but pray excuse him, he is really *so* clever."

After the first customary civilities, the count inquired after M. de Villefort.

"My husband dines with the chancellor," replied the young wife. "He has just gone; and I am sure he will much regret having lost the pleasure of seeing you."

Two visitors who were there when the count arrived, having gazed at him with all their eyes, retired after that reasonable delay required both by politeness and curiosity.

"Ah! what is your sister Valentine doing?" inquired Madame de Villefort of Édouard; "tell some one to bid

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her come here, that I may have the honor of presenting her to the count."

"You have a daughter, then, Madame?" inquired the count; "very young, I presume?"

"The daughter of M. de Villefort," replied the young wife, "by his first marriage, — a fine well-grown girl."

"But melancholy," interrupted Master Édouard, snatching the feathers out of the tail of a splendid paroquet that was screaming on its gilded perch, in order to make a plume for his hat. Madame de Villefort merely cried, "Silence, Édouard!" She then added, "This young madcap is, however, very nearly right, and merely re-echoes what he has heard me say with pain a hundred times; for Mademoiselle de Villefort is, in spite of all we can do to rouse her, of a melancholy disposition and taciturn habit which frequently injure the effect of her beauty. But she does not come, Édouard; go and ascertain the reason."

"Because they are looking for her where she is not to be found."

"And where are they looking for her?"

"With Grandpapa Noirtier."

"And do you think she is not there?"

"No, no, no, no, no, she is not there!" replied Édouard, singing his words.

"And where is she, then? If you know, why don't you tell?"

"She is under the great chestnut-tree," replied the spoiled child, as he gave, in spite of his mother's cries, live flies to the parrot, who appeared to relish that sort of game. Madame de Villefort stretched out her hand to ring, intending to direct her waiting-maid to the spot where she would find Valentine, when the young lady herself entered the room. She appeared much dejected;

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and any person who considered her attentively might have observed the traces of tears in her eyes.

Valentine, whom we have in the rapid march of our narrative presented to our readers without formally introducing her, was a tall and graceful girl of nineteen years of age, with bright chestnut hair, deep blue eyes, and that languishing air so full of distinction which characterized her mother. Her white and slender fingers, her pearly neck, her cheeks tinted with varying hues, gave her at the first view the aspect of one of those lovely Englishwomen who have been so poetically compared in their manner to a swan admiring itself. She entered the room, and seeing near her stepmother the stranger of whom she had already heard so much, saluted him without any girlish awkwardness, or even lowering her eyes, and with a grace that redoubled the count's attention. He rose to return the salutation.

"Mademoiselle de Villefort, my stepdaughter," said Madame de Villefort to Monte Cristo, leaning back on her sofa and motioning towards Valentine with her hand.

"And M. le Comte de Monte Cristo, King of China, Emperor of Cochin-China," said the young imp, looking slyly towards his sister.

Madame de Villefort at this really did turn pale, and was very nearly angry with this household plague who answered to the name of Édouard; but the count on the contrary smiled, and appeared to look at the boy complacently, which caused the maternal heart to bound again with joy and enthusiasm.

"But, Madame," replied the count, continuing the conversation, and looking by turns at Madame de Villefort and Valentine, "have I not already had the honor of meeting you and Mademoiselle? The idea occurred to me a moment since, and as Mademoiselle entered

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the sight of her was an additional ray of light thrown on a confused remembrance; excuse me the word."

"I do not think it likely, Monsieur; Mademoiselle de Villefort is not very fond of society, and we very seldom go out," said the young wife.

"Then it was not in society that I met with Mademoiselle and yourself, Madame, and this charming little fellow. Besides, the Parisian world is entirely unknown to me, for, as I believe I told you, I have been in Paris but very few days. No; but perhaps you will permit me to call to mind — stay!" The count placed his hand on his brow as if to collect his thoughts. "No — it was somewhere — away from here — it was — I do not know — but it appears that this recollection is connected with a lovely sky and some religious fête. Mademoiselle was holding flowers in her hand; the child was chasing a beautiful peacock in a garden; and you, Madame, were under the trellis of some arbor. Pray come to my aid, Madame; do not these circumstances bring to your mind some reminiscences?"

"No, indeed," replied Madame de Villefort; "and yet it appears to me, Monsieur, that if I had met you anywhere the recollection of you must have been imprinted on my memory."

"Perhaps Monsieur the Count saw us in Italy," said Valentine, timidly.

"Yes, in Italy, — it was in Italy most probably," replied Monte Cristo; "you have travelled then in Italy, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes; Madame and I were there two years ago. The doctors were afraid for my lungs, and prescribed the air of Naples. We went by Bologna, Perusa, and Rome."

"Ah, yes; true, Mademoiselle," exclaimed Monte Cristo, as if this simple indication was sufficient to deter-

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mine his recollection. "It was at Perusa on the day of the Fête-Dieu, in the garden of the Hôtel des Postes, that chance brought us together, — you, Madame de Villefort, your son, Mademoiselle, and myself; I now remember having had the honor of meeting you."

"I perfectly well remember Perusa, Monsieur, and the Hôtel des Postes and the fête to which you allude," said Madame de Villefort; "but in vain do I tax my memory, of whose treachery I am ashamed, for I really do not recall to mind that I ever had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"It is strange; but neither do I recollect meeting with you," observed Valentine, raising her beautiful eyes to the count.

"But I remember it," said Édouard.

"I will assist your memory, Madame," continued the count. "The day had been burning hot; you were waiting for horses, which were delayed in consequence of the festival. Mademoiselle was walking in the shade of the garden, and your son disappeared in pursuit of the bird."

"And I caught it, Mamma, don't you remember?" said Édouard, "and I pulled three feathers from its tail."

"You, Madame, remained under the arbor formed by the vine; do you not remember that while you were seated on a stone bench, and while, as I told you, Mademoiselle de Villefort and your young son were absent, you conversed for a considerable time with somebody?"

"Yes, — in truth, yes," answered the young wife, turning very red, "I do remember conversing with a man wrapped in a long woollen mantle; he was a medical man, I think."

"Precisely so, Madame; that man was myself. For a fortnight I had been at that hotel, during which period I had cured my *valet de chambre* of a fever and my land-

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lord of the jaundice; so that I had really acquired a reputation as a skilful physician. We talked a long time, Madame, of different subjects, — of Perugino, of Raphael, of manners, costumes, of the famous *aqua-tofana*, of which they had told you, I think you said, that certain persons in Perusa had preserved the secret."

"Yes, true," replied Madame de Villefort, hastily, and with a degree of uneasiness; "I remember now."

"I do not recollect now all the various subjects of which we discoursed, Madame," continued the count, with perfect calmness; "but I remember distinctly that falling into the error which others had entertained respecting me, you consulted me as to the health of Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Yes, really, Monsieur; you were in fact a medical man," said Madame de Villefort, "since you had cured the sick."

"Molière or Beaumarchais would reply to you, Madame, that it was precisely because I was not that I had cured my patients; for myself, I am content to say to you that I have studied chemistry and the natural sciences somewhat deeply, but still only as an amateur, you understand."

At this moment the clock struck six. "It is six o'clock," said Madame de Villefort, evidently agitated. "Valentine, will you not go and see if your grandpapa will have his dinner?"

Valentine rose, and saluting the count, left the room without replying a single word.

"Oh, Madame!" said the count when Valentine had left the room, "was it on my account that you sent Mademoiselle de Villefort away?"

"By no means," replied the young woman, quickly; "but this is the hour when we give to M. Noirtier the sad repast which supports his melancholy existence. You

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are aware, Monsieur, of the deplorable condition of my husband's father?"

"Yes, Madame, M. de Villefort spoke of it to me, — a paralysis, I think."

"Alas, yes! there is an entire want of movement in the frame of the poor old man; the mind alone is still active in this human machine, and that is faint and flickering like the light of a lamp about to expire. But excuse me, sir, for talking of our domestic misfortunes; I interrupted you at the moment when you were telling me that you were a skilful chemist."

"No, Madame, I did not say so much as that," replied the count, with a smile; "quite the contrary. I have studied chemistry because having determined to live in Eastern climates, I have been desirous of following the example of King Mithridates."

"*Mithridates, rex Ponticus,*" said the young scamp, as he cut some beautiful portraits out of a splendid album, "the individual who breakfasted every morning with a cup of poison *à la crême.*"

"Édouard, you naughty boy!" exclaimed Madame de Villefort, snatching the mutilated book from the urchin's grasp; "you are unendurable; you disturb the conversation. Leave us, and join your sister Valentine in Grandpapa Noirtier's room."

"The album," said Édouard.

"What do you mean? the album!"

"I want the album."

"Why have you cut out the pictures?"

"Oh, it amuses me."

"Go; go directly."

"I won't go unless you give me the album," said the boy, seating himself doggedly in an armchair, according to his habit of never giving way.

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"Take it, then, and disturb us no longer," said Madame de Villefort, giving the album to Édouard, who then went towards the door, led by his mother.

The count followed her with his eyes. "Let us see if she shuts the door after him," he muttered.

Madame de Villefort closed the door carefully after the child, the count appearing not to notice her; then casting a scrutinizing glance around the chamber, the young wife returned to her chair, in which she seated herself.

"Allow me to observe, Madame," said the count, with that kind tone he could assume so well, "you are really very severe with that charming child."

"Oh, sometimes severity is quite necessary," replied Madame de Villefort, with a true maternal emphasis.

"It was his Cornelius Nepos that Master Édouard was repeating when he referred to King Mithridates," continued the count; "and you interrupted him in a quotation which proves that his tutor has by no means neglected him, for your son is really advanced for his years."

"The fact is, Monsieur the Count," answered the mother, agreeably flattered, "he has great aptitude, and learns all that is set before him. He has but one fault, — he is somewhat wilful; but referring to what he said, do you believe that Mithridates used these precautions, and that these precautions were efficacious?"

"I think so, Madame, because I — I who now address you — have made use of them that I might not be poisoned at Naples, at Palermo, and at Smyrna; that is to say, on three several occasions when but for these precautions I must have lost my life."

"And your precautions were successful?"

"Completely so."

"Yes, I remember now your mentioning to me at Perusa something of this sort."

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"Indeed! did I?" said the count, with an air of surprise remarkably well counterfeited; "I really did not remember it."

"I inquired of you if poisons acted equally and with the same effect on men of the North as on men of the South; and you answered me that the cold and sluggish habits of the North did not present the same susceptibility to poison as the rich and energetic temperaments of the natives of the South."

"And that is the case," observed Monte Cristo. "I have seen Russians devour without being visibly inconvenienced vegetable substances which would infallibly have killed a Neapolitan or an Arab."

"And you really believe the result would be still more sure with us than in the East, and that in the midst of our fogs and rains a man would habituate himself more easily than in a warm latitude to this progressive absorption of poison."

"Certainly; it being at the same time understood that one is protected only against that poison to which he has accustomed himself."

"Yes, I understand that; and how would you habituate yourself, for instance, or rather how did you habituate yourself?"

"Oh, very easily. Suppose you knew beforehand the poison that would be made use of against you; suppose the poison was, for instance, brucine—"

"Brucine is extracted from the *Brucæa ferruginea*, is it not?" inquired Madame de Villefort.

"Precisely, Madame," replied Monte Cristo; "but I perceive I have not much to teach you. Allow me to compliment you on your knowledge; such learning is very rare among ladies."

"Oh, I am aware of that," said Madame de Villefort;

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"but I have a passion for the occult sciences, which speak to the imagination like poetry, and are reducible to figures like an algebraic equation. But go on, I pray you; what you say interests me extremely."

"Well," replied Monte Cristo, "suppose, then, that this poison was brucine, and you were to take a milligramme the first day, two milligrammes the second day, and so on. Well, at the end of ten days you would take a centigramme; at the end of twenty days, adding another milligramme, you would take three centigrammes, — that is to say, a dose which you would support without inconvenience, but which would be very dangerous for any other person who had not taken the same precautions. Well, then, at the end of a month, when drinking water from the same *carafe*, you would kill the person who at the same time as yourself had drank this water, without your perceiving, otherwise than from slight inconvenience, that there was any poisonous substance mingled with this water."

"Do you know any other counter-poisons?"

"I do not."

"I have often read, and read again, the history of Mithridates," said Madame de Villefort, in a tone of reflection, "and have always considered it as a fable."

"No, Madame, contrary to most history, it is a truth; but what you tell me, Madame, what you inquire of me, is not the result of a chance question, — for two years since you asked me the same questions, and said too that for a very long time this history of Mithridates occupied your mind."

"True, Monsieur. The two favorite studies of my youth were botany and mineralogy; and subsequently, when I learned that the use of simples frequently explained the whole history of a people, and the entire life of individuals in the East, as flowers illustrate all their

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thoughts of love, I have regretted I was not a man, that I might have been a Flamel, a Fontana, or a Cabanis."

"And the more, Madame," said Monte Cristo, "as the Orientals do not confine themselves, as did Mithridates, to make a cuirass of his poisons, but they also make them a dagger. Science becomes in their hands, not only a defensive weapon, but still more frequently an offensive one. The one serves against all their physical sufferings; the other against all their enemies. With opium, with belladonna, with brucæa, snake-wood, the cherry-laurel, they put to sleep all those who would keep them awake. There is not one of those women, — Egyptian, Turk, or Greek, — whom here you call 'good women,' who do not know how, by means of chemistry, to stupefy a doctor, and in psychology to amaze a confessor."

"Really!" said Madame de Villefort, whose eyes sparkled with strange fire at this conversation.

"Eh, indeed! Yes, Madame," continued Monte Cristo, "the secret dramas of the East begin and end thus, from the plant which can create love to the plant that can cause death; from the draught which opens heaven before your eyes to that which plunges a man in hell! There are as many shades of every kind as there are caprices and peculiarities in human, physical, and moral nature; and I will say further, the art of these chemists knows how to accommodate the remedy and the ill to its yearnings of love or its desires for vengeance."

"But, Monsieur," remarked the lady, "those Oriental societies, in the midst of which you have passed a portion of your existence, are as visionary as the tales that come from their strange land. A man can easily be put out of the way there, then; it is indeed the Bagdad and Bassora of M. Galland. The sultans and viziers, who rule over those societies, and who constitute what in France we call the

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Government, are in fact Haroun-al-Raschids and Giaffars, who not only pardon a poisoner, but even make him a prime minister if his crime has been an ingenious one, and who under such circumstances have the whole story written in letters of gold, to divert their hours of idleness and *ennui*."

"By no means, Madame; the fanciful exists no longer in the East. There are there now, disguised under other names, and concealed under other costumes, agents of police, magistrates, attorney-generals, and bailiffs. They hang, behead, and impale their criminals in the most agreeable manner possible; but some of these, like clever rogues, have contrived to escape human justice and succeed in their fraudulent enterprises by cunning stratagems. Among us a simpleton possessed by the demon of hate or cupidity, who has an enemy to destroy, or some near relative to dispose of, goes straight to the grocer's or druggist's, gives a false name, which leads more easily to his detection than his real one, and purchases under a pretext that the rats prevent him from sleeping five or six grams of arsenic; if he is really a cunning fellow, he goes to five or six different druggists or grocers, and thereby becomes only five or six times more easily traced. Then, when he has acquired his specific, he administers duly to his enemy or near kinsman a dose of arsenic which would make a mammoth or mastodon burst, and which without rhyme or reason makes his victim utter groans which alarm the entire neighborhood. Then arrive a crowd of policemen and constables. They fetch a doctor, who opens the dead body, and collects from the entrails and stomach a quantity of arsenic in a spoon. Next day a hundred newspapers relate the fact, with the names of the victim and the murderer. The same evening the grocer or grocers, druggist or druggists, come and say, 'It was I who

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sold the arsenic to the gentleman accused;' and rather than not recognize the guilty purchaser, they will recognize twenty. Then the foolish criminal is taken, imprisoned, interrogated, confronted, confounded, condemned, and cut off by hemp or steel; or if she be a woman of any consideration, they lock her up for life. This is the way in which you Northerners understand chemistry, Madame. Desrues was, however, I must confess, more skilful."

"What would you have, Monsieur?" said the lady, laughing; "we do what we can. All the world has not the secret of the Medicis or the Borgias."

"Now," replied the count, shrugging his shoulders, "shall I tell you the cause of all these stupidities? It is because at your theatres, by what at least I could judge by reading the pieces they play, they see persons swallow the contents of a phial, or suck the button of a ring, and fall dead instantly. Five minutes afterwards the curtain falls; and the spectators depart. They are ignorant of what comes afterwards. They see neither the commissary of police with his badge of office, nor the corporal with his four men; and that persuades many weak minds to believe that things happen in that way. But go a little way from France; go either to Aleppo or Cairo, or only to Naples or Rome, and you will see people passing by you in the streets, — people erect, smiling, and fresh-colored, of whom Asmodeus, if he were near you, would say, 'That man was poisoned three weeks ago; he will be a dead man in a month.'"

"Then," remarked Madame de Villefort, "they have again discovered the secret of the famous *aqua-tofana* which they told me at Perusa had been lost."

"Eh, indeed, does mankind ever lose anything? The arts are removed, and make a tour of the world. Things change their names, and the vulgar do not follow them, —

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that is all; but there is always the same result. Poison acts particularly on one organ or the other, — one on the stomach, another on the brain, another on the intestines. Well, the poison brings on a cough, the cough an inflammation of the lungs, or some other complaint catalogued in the book of science, which however by no means precludes it from being decidedly mortal; and if it were not, it would be sure to become so, thanks to the remedies applied by foolish doctors, who are generally bad chemists, which will act in favor of or against the malady, as you please. And then there is a human being killed according to all the rules of art and skill, in regard to whom justice makes no inquiries, as was said by a terrible chemist of my acquaintance, the worthy Abbé Adelmonte de Taormine, in Sicily, who has studied these national phenomena very profoundly."

"It is frightful, but deeply interesting," said the young woman, motionless with attention. "I thought, I must confess, that these tales were inventions of the Middle Ages."

"Yes, no doubt, but improved upon in our own age. What is the use of time, encouragements, medals, crosses, and Monthyon prizes, if they do not lead society towards perfection? Yet man will never be perfect until he learns to create and destroy, like God; he does know how to destroy, and that is halfway on the road."

"So," added Madame de Villefort, constantly returning to her object, "the poisons of the Borgias, the Medicis, the Renés, the Ruggieris, and later probably that of Baron de Trenck, whose story has been so misused by modern drama and romance — "

"Were objects of art, Madame, and nothing more," replied the count. "Do you suppose that the real *savant* addresses himself stupidly to the mere individual? By

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no means. Science loves eccentricities, leaps, and bounds, trials of strength, fancies, if I may be allowed so to term them. Thus, for instance, the excellent Abbé Adelmonte, of whom I spoke to you just now, made on this subject some marvellous experiments."

"Really!"

"Yes; I will mention one to you. He had a remarkably fine garden, full of vegetables, flowers, and fruit. From among these vegetables he selected the most simple, — a cabbage, for instance. For three days he watered this cabbage with a distillation of arsenic; on the third, the cabbage began to droop and turn yellow. At that moment he cut it. In the eyes of everybody it seemed fit for table, and preserved its wholesome appearance. In the knowledge of the Abbé Adelmonte alone it was poisoned. He then took the cabbage to the room where he had rabbits, — for the Abbé Adelmonte had a collection of rabbits, cats, and guinea-pigs as fine as his collection of vegetables, flowers, and fruit. Well, the Abbé Adelmonte took a rabbit, and made it eat a leaf of the cabbage. The rabbit died. What magistrate would find, or even venture to insinuate anything against this? What *procureur du roi* has ever ventured to draw up an accusation against M. Magendie or M. Flourens, in consequence of the rabbits, cats, and guinea-pigs they have killed? Not one. So, then, the rabbit dies, and justice takes no notice. This rabbit dead, the Abbé Adelmonte has its entrails taken out by his cook and thrown on the dunghill; on this dunghill is a hen, who pecking these intestines is in her turn taken ill, and dies next day. At the moment when she is struggling in the convulsions of death a vulture is flying by (there are a good many vultures in Adelmonte's country); this bird darts on the dead bird and carries it away to a rock, where it dines off its prey. Three days

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afterwards this poor vulture, who has been very much indisposed since that dinner, feels very giddy suddenly while flying aloft in the clouds, and falls heavily into a fish-pond. The pike, eels, and carp eat greedily always, as everybody knows; they feast on the vulture. Well, suppose the next day one of these eels, or pike, or carp is served at your table, poisoned as they are in the fourth degree. Well, then, your guest will be poisoned in the fifth degree, and will die at the end of eight or ten days of pains in the intestines, sickness, or abscess of the pylorus. The doctors open the body and say, 'The subject has died of a tumor on the liver, or of typhoid fever!'"

"But," remarked Madame de Villefort, "all these circumstances which you link thus one to another may be broken by the least accident; the vulture may not pass in season, or may fall a hundred yards from the fish-pond."

"Ah, just there is the province of art. To be a great chemist in the East we must direct chance; and this is to be achieved."

Madame de Villefort was deep in thought, yet listened attentively. "But," she exclaimed suddenly, "arsenic is indelible, indestructible; in what way soever it is absorbed, it will be found again in the body of the creature from the moment when it has been taken in sufficient quantity to cause death."

"Precisely so," cried Monte Cristo, — "precisely so; and this is what I said to my worthy Adelmonte. He reflected, smiled, and replied to me by a Sicilian proverb, which I believe is also a French proverb, 'My son, the world was not made in a day, but in seven. Return on Sunday.' On the Sunday following I did return to him. Instead of having watered his cabbage with arsenic, he had watered it this time with a solution of salts, having

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their basis in strychnine, *strychnos colubrina*, as the learned term it. Now, the cabbage had not the slightest appearance of disease in the world, and the rabbit had not the smallest distrust; yet five minutes afterwards the rabbit was dead. The fowl pecked at the rabbit, and the next day was dead. We were the vultures, so we opened the fowl, and this time all particular symptoms had disappeared; there were only general symptoms. There was no peculiar indication in any organ, — an excitement of the nervous system only; a case of cerebral congestion. The fowl had not been poisoned; she had died of apoplexy. Apoplexy is a rare disease among fowls, I believe, but very common among men."

Madame de Villefort appeared more and more reflective. "It is very fortunate," she observed, "that such substances could only be prepared by chemists, for otherwise, indeed, one half the world would poison the other half."

"By chemists and persons who have a taste for chemistry," said Monte Cristo, carelessly.

"And then," said Madame de Villefort, endeavoring by a struggle, and with effort, to get away from her thoughts, "however skilfully it is prepared, crime is always crime; and if it avoid human scrutiny, it does not escape the eye of God. The Orientals are stronger than we are in cases of conscience, and have prudently abolished hell, — that is the difference."

"Really, Madame, this is a scruple which naturally must occur to a pure mind like yours, but which would easily yield before sound reasoning. The bad side of human thought will always be defined by the paradox of Jean Jacques Rousseau, you know, — 'the mandarin who is killed at five thousand leagues' distance by raising the tip of the finger.' Man's whole life passes in doing these things, and his intellect is exhausted by reflecting on them.

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You will find very few persons who will go and brutally thrust a knife in the heart of a fellow-creature, or will administer to him, in order to remove him from the surface of the globe, that quantity of arsenic of which we just now talked. Such a thing is really out of rule, — eccentric or stupid. To attain such a point the blood must be warmed to thirty-six degrees, the pulse be at least at ninety, and the feelings excited beyond the ordinary limit. But if, passing, as we do in philology, from the word itself to its softened synonyme, you make an elimination; if instead of committing an ignoble assassination, you merely and simply remove from your path him who is in your way, and that without shock or violence, without the display of those sufferings which becoming a punishment make a martyr of the victim, and of him who inflicts them a butcher in every sense of the word; if there be no blood, no groans, no convulsions, nor, above all, that horrible and compromising instantaneousness of the deed, — then one escapes the clutch of the human law, which says to you, 'Do not disturb society!' This is the mode in which they manage these things and succeed in Eastern climes, where there are grave and phlegmatic persons who care very little for the matter of time in conjunctures of importance."

"Yet conscience remains!" remarked Madame de Villefort, in an agitated voice, and with a stifled sigh.

"Yes," answered Monte Cristo, "happily, yes, conscience does remain; and if it did not, how wretched we should be! After every action requiring exertion it is conscience that saves us, for it supplies us with a thousand good excuses, of which we alone are judges; and these reasons, how excellent soever in producing sleep, would avail perhaps but little to save our lives before a tribunal. Thus Richard III., for instance, was marvellously served

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by his conscience after the putting away of the two children of Edward IV.; in fact, he could say, 'These two children of a cruel and persecuting king, who have inherited the vices of their father, which I alone could perceive in their juvenile propensities, — these two children are impediments in my way of promoting the happiness of the English people, to whom they would undoubtedly have done harm.' Thus was Lady Macbeth served by her conscience, when she sought to give her son, and not her husband, whatever Shakespeare may say, a throne. Ah, maternal love is a great virtue, a powerful motive, — so powerful that it excuses a multitude of things; so that after the death of Duncan, Lady Macbeth would have been very miserable without her conscience."

Madame de Villefort listened with avidity to these appalling maxims and horrible paradoxes, delivered by the count with that ironical simplicity which was peculiar to him. After a moment's silence she said, "Do you know, Monsieur the Count, that you are a very terrible reasoner, and that you look at the world through a somewhat distempered medium? Is it, then, because you have studied humanity through alembics and crucibles? For you are right, you are a great chemist; and the elixir you administered to my son, which recalled him to life almost instantaneously — "

"Oh, do not place any reliance on that, Madame. *One* drop of that elixir sufficed to recall life to a dying child, but three drops would have impelled the blood into his lungs in such a way as to have produced most violent palpitations; six would have suspended his respiration and caused syncope more serious than that in which he was; ten would have destroyed him. You know, Madame, how suddenly I snatched him from those phials which he so imprudently touched."

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"Is it, then, so terrible a poison?"

"Oh, no! In the first place, let us agree that the word 'poison' does not exist; because in medicine use is made of the most violent poisons, which become, according as they are made use of, salutary remedies."

"What, then, is it?"

"A skilful preparation by my friend, the worthy Abbé Adelmonte, who taught me the use of it."

"Oh," observed Madame de Villefort, "it must be an admirable anti-spasmodic."

"Perfect, Madame, as you have seen," replied the count; "and I frequently make use of it, — with all possible prudence, though, be it observed," he added, smiling.

"Most assuredly," responded Madame de Villefort, in the same tone. "As for me, so nervous, and so subject to fainting-fits, I should require a Dr. Adelmonte to invent for me some means of breathing freely, and tranquillizing my mind, in the fear I have of dying some fine day of suffocation. In the mean while, as the thing is difficult to find in France, and your abbé is not probably disposed to make a journey to Paris on my account, I must continue to use the anti-spasmodics of M. Planché; and mint and Hoffmann's drops are among my favorite remedies. Here are some lozenges which are made expressly for me; they are compounded doubly strong."

Monte Cristo opened the tortoise-shell box, which the young woman presented to him, and imbibed the odor of the lozenges with the air of an amateur who thoroughly appreciated their composition. "They are indeed exquisite," he said; "but as they are necessarily submitted to the process of deglutition, — a function which it is frequently impossible for a fainting person to accomplish, — I prefer my own specific."

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"Undoubtedly; and so should I prefer it, after the effects I have seen produced. But of course it is a secret; and I am not so indiscreet as to ask it of you."

"But I," said Monte Cristo, rising as he spoke, — "I am gallant enough to offer it you."

"Oh, Monsieur!"

"Only remember one thing: a small dose is a remedy; a large one is poison. One drop will restore life, as you have witnessed; five or six will inevitably kill, and in a way the more terrible, inasmuch as poured into a glass of wine, it would not in the slightest degree affect its flavor. But I say no more, Madame; it is really as if I were advising you."

The clock struck half-past six, and a lady was announced, — a friend of Madame de Villefort, who came to dine with her.

"If I had the honor of seeing you for the third or fourth time, Monsieur the Count, instead of for only the second," said Madame de Villefort; "if I had the honor of being your friend, instead of having only the happiness of lying under an obligation to you, — I should insist on detaining you to dinner, and not allow myself to be daunted by a first refusal."

"A thousand thanks, Madame," replied Monte Cristo, "but I have an engagement which I cannot break: I have promised to escort to the Académie a Greek princess of my acquaintance who has never seen your grand opera, and who relies on me to conduct her thither."

"Adieu, then, sir, and do not forget my recipe."

"Ah, in truth, Madame, to do that I must forget the hour's conversation I have had with you, which is indeed impossible."

Monte Cristo bowed and left the house. Madame de Villefort remained immersed in thought. "He is a very

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strange man," she said, "and in my opinion is himself the Adelmonte he talks about."

As to Monte Cristo, the result had surpassed his utmost expectations. "Good!" said he, as he went away; "this is a fruitful soil, and I feel certain that the seed sown will not be cast on barren ground." Next morning, faithful to his promise, he sent the desired prescription.

END OF VOL. II.

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